

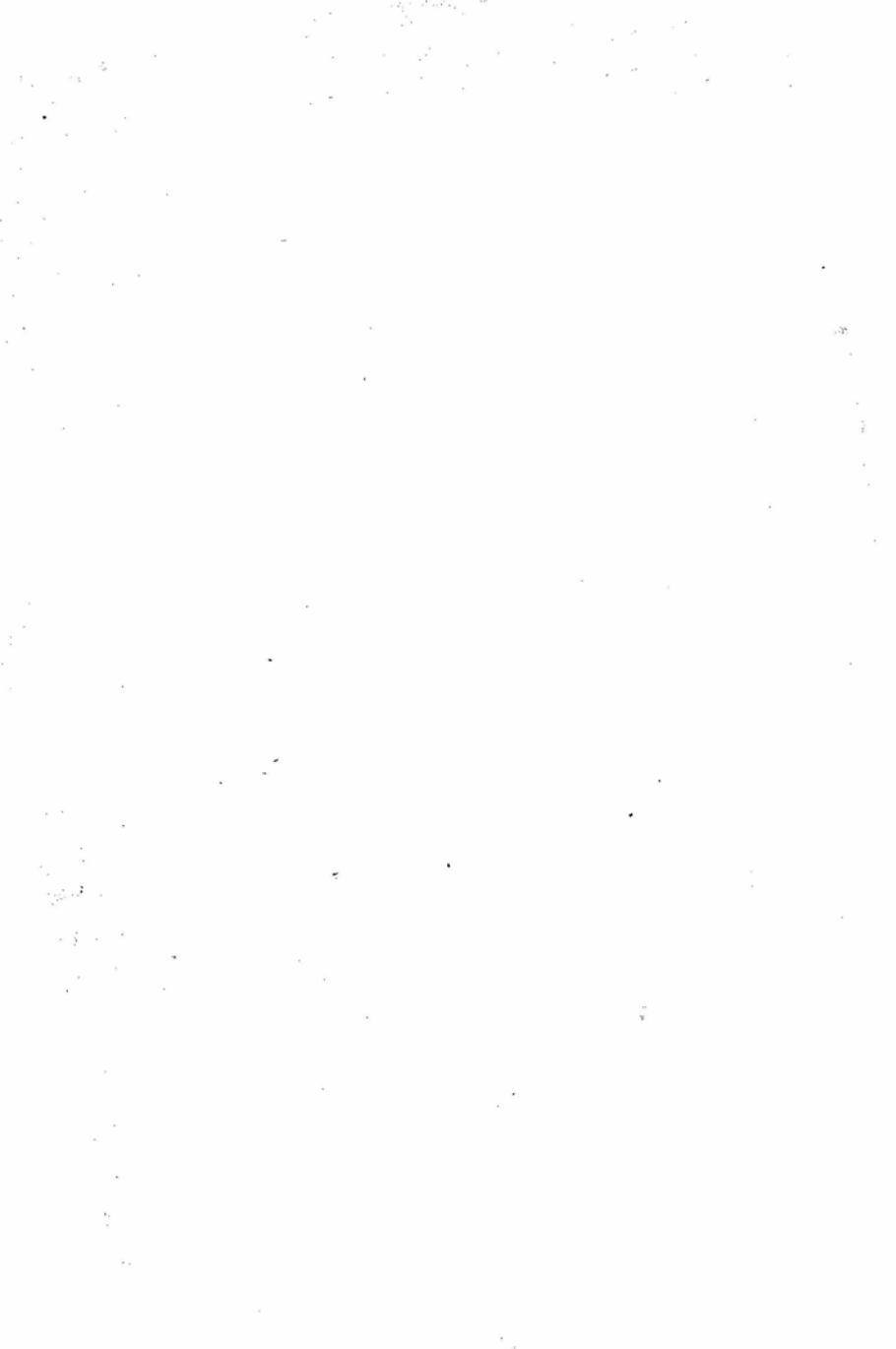
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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
OF RELIGION IN CHINA



THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION IN CHINA

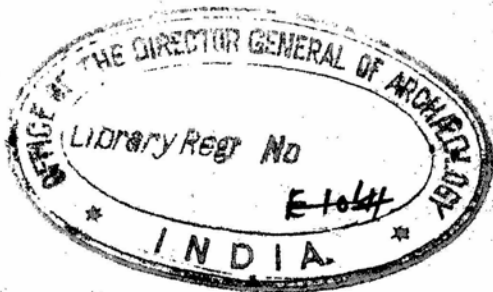
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PREFACE

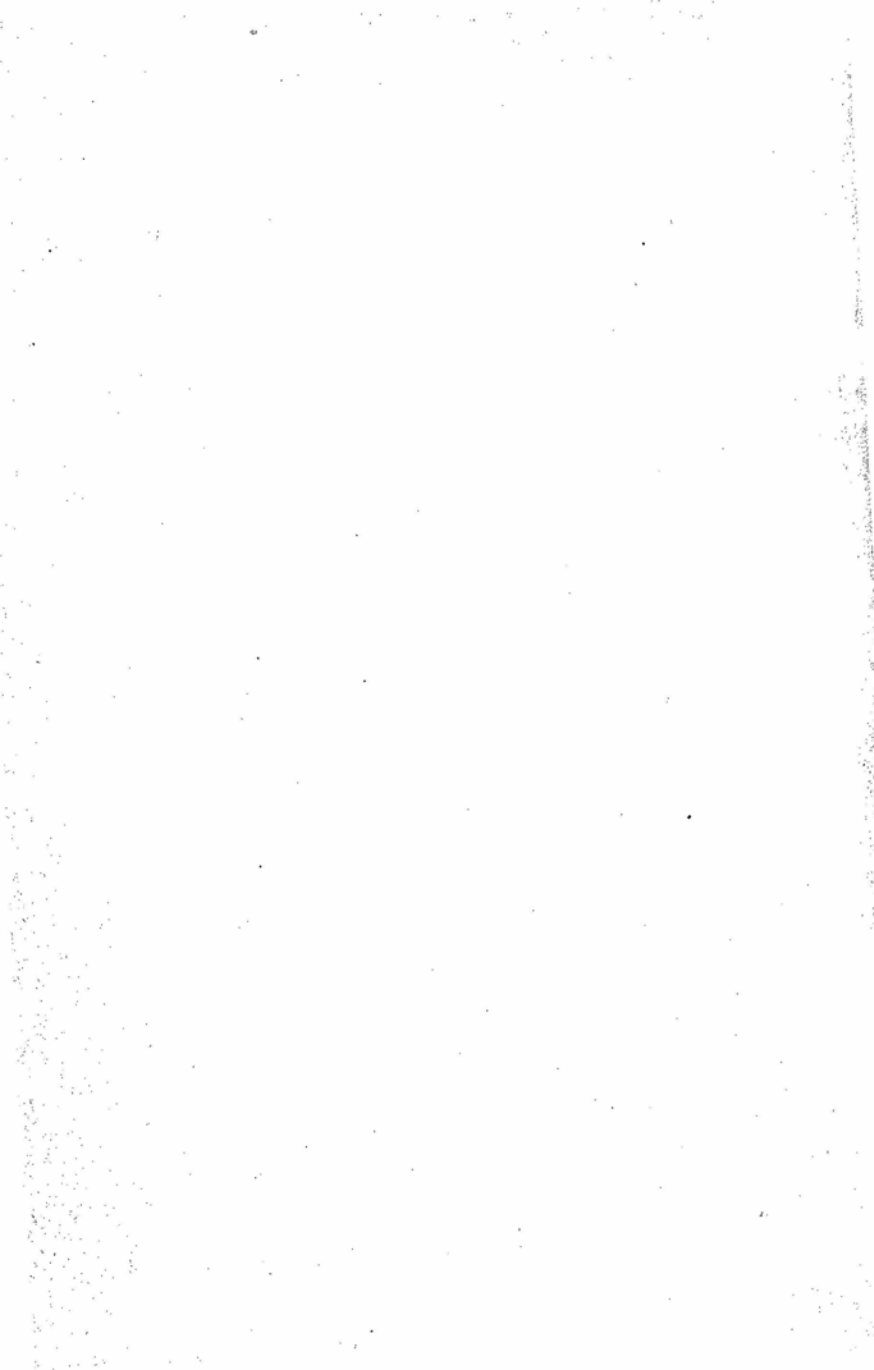
THE reflections on the Religion and History of China contained in the following pages give the substance, somewhat expanded and revised, of an address delivered on the 8th and 9th of December, 1913, to the students of the Caermarthen Presbyterian College. In submitting them now to the indulgence of a wider public the author possibly owes a few words of explanation to his readers, who may, perhaps, in the light of later happenings, find some of the judgments over confident. A year ago China seemed to be in the melting-pot; to-day it is our Western European world whose faiths, institutions, and traditions are upon their trial. Yet perhaps the only explanation needed is simply to say that these pages were written before the War.

NEWCHWANG,

November 1914.

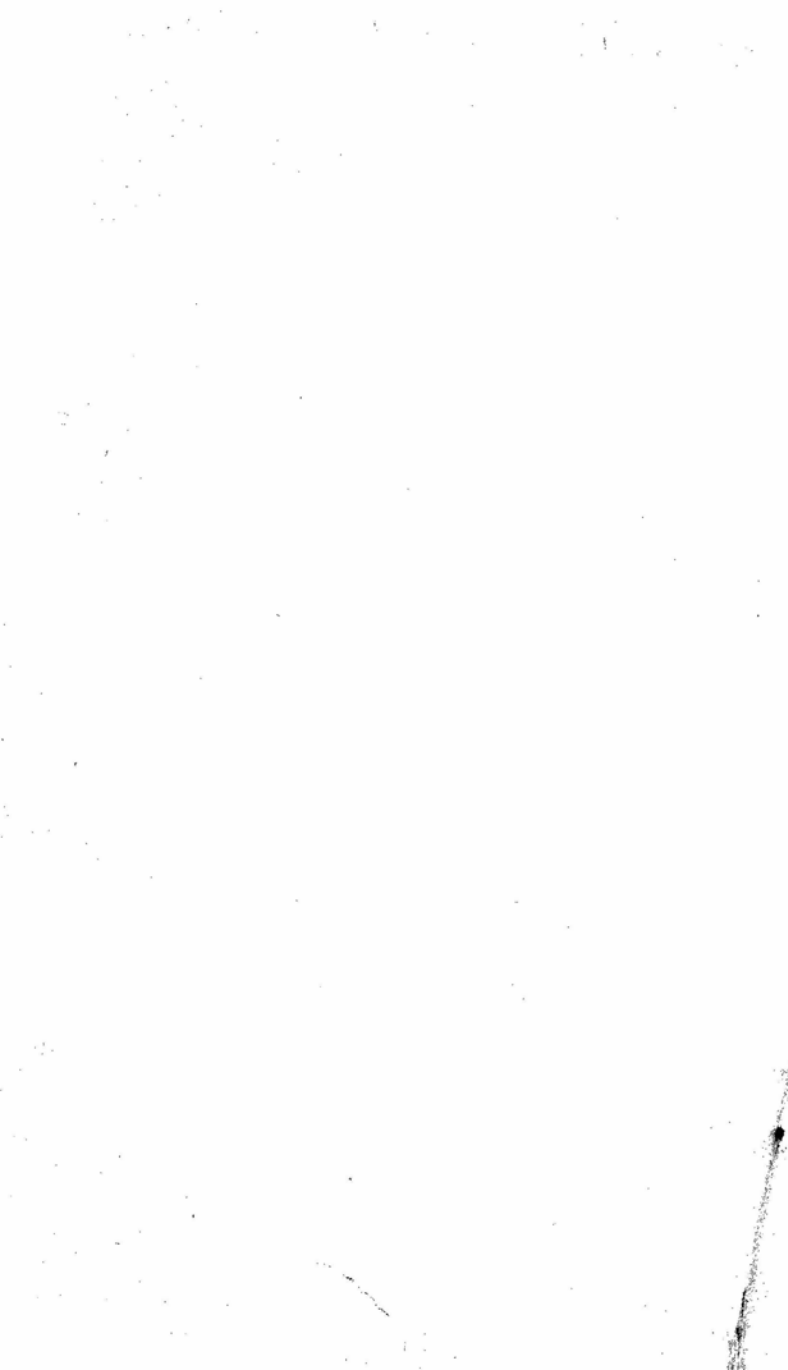
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I

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PRIMITIVE CONCEPTIONS



CHAPTER I

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PRIMITIVE CONCEPTIONS

THE subject of the relation between Religion and History in China is one so vast that it would require a long work in many volumes for its adequate development. The following pages can only profess to be a rough sketch, in which indulgence is asked for whatever in the treatment is disjointed and incomplete.

There are, of course, many books on Chinese religion. There is a monumental work by Professor de Groot, "The Religious System of China"—not yet finished—in which he attempts to treat the subject systematically, with the support of quotations from native authors, ancient and modern, tracing the origin and history through the ages of the various ideas and practices, philosophies and superstitions met with in China, with their relation to law and custom, and so forth :

all illustrated with diagrams and tables, pictures and photographs, gathered during many years' residence in the country. Six big volumes of the intended work have appeared, and at least as much more would be required if it should ever be completed on the same scale. Yet Professor de Groot confines himself, as far as really detailed treatment is concerned, to one little corner of China, namely, the city and neighbourhood of Amoy, dealing only in a broad, general way with the phenomena to be found in other parts.

Many works, I need not say, deal with special features of Chinese religion: e.g. the doctrines of Confucius and his disciples; certain classical texts of Taoism; Buddhism in the phases which are found in China. The history of the country, as far as English books are concerned, has been less adequately treated; but here, again, the total is a big library of literature of every degree of value.

A common, superficial notion, apparently prevalent in many quarters, is that the Chinese people are divided into three native religious communities or sects: the *san chiao*, or "Three Teachings,"

Three schools
or tendencies
of thought.

Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. And it must be admitted that this idea finds considerable countenance in the way in which these Three Teachings are commonly spoken of by the Chinese themselves.

Yet, on looking a little more attentively at the phenomena presented by China, one soon comes to the conclusion that such a presentment of the position is inaccurate. The Three Teachings are not separate sects in the sort of sense that Christians, Jews, and Mahometans are separate in Western countries; or that, for example, Roman Catholics, adherents of the Church of England, and Protestant Nonconformists are separate in England. They do not cover the whole ground of Chinese ideas and observances, nor do they exclude one another. They may be regarded, better, as schools or tendencies of thought, or perhaps as moods of the Chinese mind which may be manifested in the same individual at different times or on different occasions.

Two of these Teachings, the Buddhist and the Taoist, have priesthoods; all three have shrines, temples, or other holy places. But the ordinary Chinese layman cannot truth-

fully be said to belong to any of them. At times he calls in the services of priests, perhaps makes offerings or prayers at temples, goes on pilgrimage to holy places, and so on ; but he is not a sectarian adherent of these priests ; he is not a member of a congregation regularly meeting for worship at these temples. Individuals may, of course, be attracted to one teaching more than to another, may deem one more truthful, or more helpful, or more efficacious, or more—what shall I say?—socially correct than another.

All the educated classes, all the official classes, profess a profound reverence for the teachings and the classical or sacred literature of the Confucianists, and in that sense they are Confucianists. They would misunderstand and possibly resent the question, should they be asked if they were Taoists or Buddhists, reading into the inquiry a suggestion that perhaps they might be supposed to be magicians or monks, or in some way cut off from ordinary membership of society. Yet these same people will, on occasion, call in Buddhist monks to sing a “mass” at a funeral, or consult a Taoist

fortune-teller to have their children's horoscopes cast, or so forth. In the days of health and prosperity the Chinese, as a rule, show curiously little reverence for the images that abound in temples, nay, often regard these sanctuaries and their inmates with the most outspoken contempt; yet, on a bed of sickness they will call for a wonder-working P'usa to be brought before them as readily as the people of Moscow used to send for the Ikon of the Iberian Madonna, and now—the theft of certain jewels from the original having led to a discontinuance of the practice—have a replica brought to their homes.

The point I want to emphasize is this: If we go to Russia we shall find the great bulk of the people to be not only subjects of the Russian State, but adherents of a perfectly definite Church—the Russian branch of the Greek or Eastern Orthodox form of Christianity. They speak of one another as “the orthodox.” In Spain we shall find, equally definitely, that people in general are Roman Catholics; in Scotland, that they are Presbyterian Protestants; in Turkey or Arabia we shall find them Sunnite or Orthodox Mahometans; in Persia, Shiah Mahometans—and

so on in many other countries. In each, those who do not adhere to the prevalent form of religion are commonly regarded by the rest as "heretics," or outsiders, or in some measure as an inferior sort of people, less blessed with the grace and the favour of God than the dominant "orthodox" are. The idea is perhaps less insisted upon now than it once was, yet it would not be difficult in all these countries to find it expressed, with every appearance of strong conviction, that all who are not adherents of the locally dominant Church are under the ban of Divine displeasure, deserving to be subjected to disabilities, perhaps severe punishment in this world, and doomed to a very much worse fate in the world to come.

In China there is little of all this, and what there is is defended on somewhat different grounds. The state has, hitherto at any rate, given a certain patronage to Confucianism—or perhaps it should be put the other way round: Confucianism has allied itself intimately with the state, has dwelt on the duty of man in his capacity as a citizen or subject of the state, and so has come to regard itself as the *chêng chiao*, or *chêng tao*, the correct,

proper, orthodox teaching of the nation in its corporate capacity—of the official classes in particular; the *ju chiao*, or learned teaching of the educated and scholarly. Yet even this is only partially true: Confucianism has never been the mental and moral atmosphere of the masses, and it would be easy enough to cite instances among the governing class of persons who have lived under quite other influences; who have “accumulated merit” by endowing Buddhist monasteries, or been guided in their public acts by the advice of Taoist mystics; and this has never seemed to the Chinese at large to be incongruous or inconsistent.

For example, the great Emperor K'ang-hsi, besides officiating as the Vice-Regent of Heaven at the various ceremonies of the State Religion, at the Temple of Heaven, etc., attended almost every morning at the big Buddhist temple outside the north gate of the Forbidden City at Peking, called in Taoist priests from time to time as soothsayers, and all the while so coquetted with Roman Catholic ideas that, like Felix, he was almost persuaded to be a Christian.

There have been persecutions in China,

but they have been directed against tendencies or practices which have seemed at some given moment socially dangerous, rather than attempts to uproot or deflect opinions because of any supposed peril to the souls of those who may come to hold them. In view of passages in the Expansion of the Sacred Edict of K'ang-hsi, I should hesitate to assert that this latter idea has been wholly absent, even in literature and legislation reflecting the ideas of the intelligent classes, while appeals to ignorant prejudice on a lower plane have, no doubt, been frequent and often wildly fanatical. Yet it may, I think, be said that persecution in China has been social and political in its motive rather than grounded on aversion to religious opinions as such; that it has never been so systematic or so embittered as in Europe; and that in modern times it has, as a rule, been simply "anti-foreign."

There has been in China, as elsewhere, the notion that to hold unpopular or unusual religious opinions, to dissent from the opinion of the majority, is hateful and harmful to that majority; there has been the notion that to hold strange opinions is—as, of course,

intellectual error may be—evidence of stupidity ; there has been, very decidedly, the notion that certain opinions are opposed to patriotism, or to public interests, general or local ; but it has rarely been supposed that heresy is a thing in itself sinful and offensive, to be reprobated and punished and exterminated even though it does not hurt or interfere with ourselves. The heretic has been frequently accused of all manner of wickedness, supposed, reasonably or unreasonably, to be committed by him ; he has been popularly regarded as an enemy of society, a demon capable of any enormity, possible or impossible, and on that ground hated and pursued with rancour ; but, apart from such accusations or suspicions of immoral and anti-social conduct, his opinions have been generally regarded as a matter for his own choice and judgment.

We find in China a mass of practices which are not really distinctive of any of the Three Teachings, which are accepted or tacitly assumed as part of the system of all three, or, more truly, as outside all three, but which we should unhesitatingly class as religious observances.

Basis in
nationality.

Some of these are of immemorial antiquity, carrying us back to an order of ideas in which the head of a family was regarded as the high priest of his household, the chieftain of a clan the high priest of the clan, the sovereign of the state the high priest of the nation, whose function it is to make intercession for his people in a representative capacity before the unseen Powers. We get, in fact, into a region where religion and nationality seem to merge one in another—and that, I think, is the true basis on which the structure of Chinese religion is built up.

Beyond a doubt this is so historically. There was a state before there were schools of thought; there were tribes before there was an organized state; there were families before there were tribes. And a whole mass of ideas centring round the state, the tribe or clan, and the family, are assumed by all the Chinese people as axioms, to attack which is heresy indeed.

All sections of the people accept a common body of what we can only call national myths—beliefs in certain great demigods or patriarchs, or heroes, or whatever we may call them, e.g. Fu Hsi and Shên Nung, Huang Ti,

Yao and Shun, and Yü the Great, who are believed to have been the originators of human

institutions, who appear in history books something in the way that

Common body
of myths.

Adam and Noah, or Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob appear in the Jewish Scriptures, and who, while they are held to have been historical personages at such or such dates in remote antiquity, are also worshipped in temples as if they were existing divinities.

This takes us one step farther. All through Chinese traditional belief there is no hard and fast line between a human soul and an object of worship. Indeed, except that there is a vague belief in a T'ien or Shang Ti—Heavenly Providence or Overlord of All Things—beyond all human or other existence—the whole body of objects of worship are more or less distinctly conceived of as having had in the past, sometimes as destined to have in the future, a human, or at least a material, incarnation. This is carried so far that it may be said that all human souls are, or some day may be, objects of a reverence very closely akin to worship. Every descendant, at any rate, worships his ancestors. He does not suppose them to be Almighty

Gods, but he does suppose that their spirits pervade the places where their bodies are at rest, take an interest in his welfare, and can, according to how he remembers and venerates them, profoundly influence his fate, here and hereafter.

Ancestor
worship.

To understand Chinese religious ideas at all we must get the notion deeply engrained into us that the spirits of our ancestors are, for us at any rate, objects of worship; that the due celebration of the proper rites before their tombs, or their memorial tablets—the placing of little bits of yellowish paper on their graves at the Spring Festival of Ch'ing Ming, for example—is a matter of supreme importance to us.

If they have been people of distinction the worship will extend beyond the family circle. There will be shrines, or, it may be, elaborate temples erected to their memory, not only at the place of their burial, but, quite possibly, in many other places as well. So we pass to a conception of a sort of canonization, or posthumous ennobling of the dead, and you will find that one of the most serious functions of all Chinese governments has been to decree what kind or measure of canonization is to

be accorded to national heroes or celebrities who are deemed by each succeeding generation to be worthy of such distinction.

On all such deceased personages a name, known as their Miao-hao, i.e. "temple name" or Shih-ming, "name of canonization," is conferred after death, whether they be emperors or any other persons deemed worthy of posthumous reverence, and it is under this posthumous name that they are commonly worshipped.

The being whom we usually call the Chinese God of War, Kuan Ti, is a perfectly historical character, a certain general, Kuan Yü, who flourished about A.D. 200, and who, after several intermediate steps of glorification, was raised to his present rank of "godhood" by Imperial Decree of the year A.D. 1594. I would call attention also to the recent and very instructive instance of Sir Robert Hart, where, on account of his eminent services to the Chinese state, all his ancestors were, on his death, ennobled by Imperial command for five generations back. Every Emperor is canonized in ordinary course; he becomes in this way a member of the national pantheon, and is worshipped after death, universally, so

long as his dynasty retains the throne, locally, and in cases of special distinction as a ruler, long afterwards. It is commonly expected of a new dynasty, and imputed to them as an evidence of piety and good feelings, to arrange that the ancestral sacrificial rites of the preceding line or lines be not wholly cut off; accordingly endowments, lands etc., are assigned for this pious purpose. In earlier days we find that certain vassals of the crown held their fiefs as representatives of the most ancient, possibly legendary dynasties. Statesmen, generals, scholars, are similarly honoured; they are treated in fact very much as if they were, at least for some purposes, ancestors far beyond the circle of their physical descendants. In the orthodox Confucian system this practice has received a special degree of development and attention, in the creation of a class of "Worthies"—Hsien-jên—entitled to have their tablets, sometimes their images (but that is rare), erected in the Wên Miao or Confucian Temples of Worthies. To be accorded such distinction is, next to being venerated as a *Shêng-jên*, or "Sage," the highest honour in Chinese estimation that can be conferred on merit.

On the other hand, if ancestral or family worship is liable to extensions of this kind, it is also subject to an important limitation in another direction. By marriage a woman passes into the family of her husband, and consequently, in Chinese thought, into the dominion of the spirits of his ancestors, and she commonly ceases to worship her own ancestors. She has, so to speak, transferred her allegiance. As with Ruth, his people became her people and his God her God.

This worship of ancestors has prevailed universally, always, as far as we know the past history of the Chinese race. They are a people who worship their ancestors, and who regard the worship of ancestors as, above all other ties, the bond which holds communities together, and the main support of morality and the decencies of family life. To obey your parents while living, and to serve them when dead, is the virtue of "Hsiao," piety or filial duty—the root virtue from which all others are deduced. In the strict etymological meaning of the word Religion, it is, in Chinese eyes, "Religion," the bond which unites men together in societies. The conception is not Confucianism—though Con-

fucianism accepts it unreservedly, and the classical literature dwells on it persistently, on almost every page—but a conception anterior to Confucius.

Indeed, it is historically established that the tendency of Confucius and his disciples was to restrain the exaggerations into which ancestor worship has often been, and was, especially in primitive times, liable to degenerate; to regulate it, in fact, into a more tolerable and civilized institution than it might otherwise have been. We see this especially in the minute care with which Confucianists, from the compilers of the Book of Rites downwards, have organized dress and other observances connected with

Origin of
mourning.

mourning for the dead. It has seemed to Chinese opinion a matter of the utmost public importance that the state should prescribe exactly for what length of time people should wear mourning garments, what garments they should wear, of what materials and colour, and for what relatives they should wear the various prescribed degrees of mourning. And, looking at the vast mass of intricate regulations, ancient and modern, on this

subject, tracing the modifications worked in them in the lapse of ages—modifications, as I should infer from the comparative lists from different periods shown in De Groot's work, mostly due to the gradual elimination or softening down of feudal or aristocratic ideas—we come upon instructive and important conclusions as to what it all means.

To us the wearing of mourning is merely a personal indication of sorrow; to the Chinese it no doubt is an indication of sorrow at the loss of the departed, but it is much else. The personal sorrow element is a detail — possibly an afterthought; the original, underlying idea is a symbol of deprivation. Deprivation of what? Not only of the presence and moral support of the dead relative, senior, or superior (only a low degree of mourning, and for a very limited time, is ever worn for a junior or a dependent, however closely related), but of the material assistance which his family derived from him. He is gone, and has left us not merely sorrowing, but helpless and destitute, obliged to clothe ourselves in rags and sack-cloth, or at least in colourless, plain garments — white, or some unusual colour — so

deprived of a home that we cannot sleep in our usual bed, in our usual room, but must build a mud hut in the courtyard to occupy for a few days, or a few months, or, if we are to show perfect sentiments, as long as three years; so weakened by loss of food that we need a staff for our support, or can only crawl behind the coffin upheld by stronger arms than our own. In the extreme case, the symbolism is plainly emblematic of absolute, total destitution.

All this, in modern times, is expressed symbolically; but was it always so? Chinese history indicates pretty plainly that it was not. The primitive Chinese man, possibly not quite realizing the nature or the irrevocability of death, left all his possessions to the dead; gave up to him his hut and his weapons, his cattle and his household implements; called on his soul for days or months to return, and, when at length he was convinced that no return of the wandering spirit was to be expected, went away, destitute, alone and in rags, and built himself another hut in the wilderness elsewhere.

To this day a family graveyard, in the north of China, gives us the truest picture we

can hope to have of a primeval Chinese village. The graves are shaped like miniature huts; they are arranged strictly according to prescribed rules about family precedence; they are furnished with miniature images of all that the dead may be supposed to want, should they, after all, some day come to life again; or else these objects, made in paper and bamboo, are burnt in effigy at the place of burial. In older, but quite historical times, things were not done so cheaply; the grave would be filled with earthenware or terracotta models of all sorts of objects—horses and carts, houses, furniture, and slaves—as we find so plentifully in burial-places of the T'ang Dynasty (seventh to tenth century A.D.). In yet earlier times these articles were not models, but the real thing; for the ideal was to supply the dead with all he could conceivably need. If he was a great chieftain, the sacrifices were made on a most magnificent scale. We have record of emperors—I am thinking now of the period one or two centuries before to an equal length of time after the Christian Era—with whom ninety or a hundred horses were buried, alive or dead, and other possessions on the same

scale. Some of the chief's dependents, his slaves, the ladies of his harem, or such at least as had not borne children to him, either sacrificed themselves or were sacrificed. The practice of suttee by hanging or burying alive, now and then by burning, if less widely prevalent than in India, has never wholly ceased in China; instances are to be found, here and there, in all periods of history, from the famous case of the three statesmen of Ts'in, whose sad fate in being made to go down into the pit at the burial of Duke Mu in the seventh century B.C., is the subject of a pathetic ballad in the Book of Odes, down to the present day. Suicide on a parent's grave is accounted honourable, and, like remaining through life a faithful widow, may be, and often is, commemorated by the erection of an ornamental archway, or *p'ailou*, as a record of the act of self-sacrifice. A very few years ago it was common to see in the *Peking Gazette*—and such notices may, indeed be found in newspapers to-day—memorials from local officials recommending for some mark of honour persons whose filial affection had led them to cut flesh from or otherwise mutilate their own

Human
sacrifice.

bodies, as a sacrifice to secure the recovery from illness of a sick parent; and such acts are regularly esteemed not only meritorious but likely to effect the purpose desired. Sacrifice of human beings, voluntary or involuntary, is in fact a constant feature of Chinese reverence towards ancestors and chieftains.

In the extreme case, the celebrations attending the burial of the great conqueror Ts'in

The burial of
Ts'in Shih
Huang-ti. Shih Huang-ti, the proceedings went far beyond these limits. It

was in 209 B.C., a relatively modern time, full in the light of authentic history, that the mighty warrior was laid to rest under a gigantic tumulus—the largest artificial hill in the world, I suppose, 500 feet high and about two miles in circuit—in a labyrinth of underground passages, beside what is described as a “sea” of quicksilver, intended to preserve the body for all time against decay, with many hundreds of the women and slaves of his court and a fabulous mass of treasure. And when the work was completed, lest after ages should ever know the clue of that labyrinth, all the workmen, ten thousand in number, who had been employed in its construction, were driven into the underground passages and the

openings closed for ever. That tumulus is there to this day, a few miles from Hsian in Shensi, for whoever shall care to explore its recesses, and whilst its construction is, as I said, the supreme and crowning instance on record of this sort of barbarity, it is only the greatest example among many. As Ts'in Shih Huang-ti was greater than other Chinese potentates in life, so he went to what, in the ideas of that age, was accounted a more magnificent death; but all through Chinese history we may find the traces of the archaic barbarism of which his funeral was the crowning masterpiece.

In the ancient classical literature of China we find human sacrifices sometimes reprobated as an abomination, often as a vain display of extravagance. Confucius himself seems to regard them as a depraved aberration arising from the practice common in his time of burying straw effigies with the dead; but the real order of ideas is surely the reverse. The straw images of the comparatively advanced culture of so civilized a state as the Lu (Western Shantung) of Confucius's time were the relics of a prehistoric age when the images were flesh and blood.

The picture I have in my mind of primitive China is no Arcadian idyll of the golden days of Yao and Shun, but a very hard and cruel state of society, where human life was held terribly cheap; where the interests of the poor and the helpless, the young and the dependent, were ruthlessly sacrificed; where oppression and violence, war and devastation scourged mankind into submission to the caprices of tyrannous chieftains; where abject slavery was the lot of all but a favoured few, and where the only alternative to feudal anarchy was a military despotism depending on the life and vigour of one man, and the only known conception of law was the elaboration and punctilious observance of ritual in which superstition and fear played a far larger part than reason or enlightened concern for morality or the public good.

Were these primeval Chinese, with their burdensome ceremonial, their perpetual civil strife, their infanticide, their suttee, their horrible human sacrifices, bad men, outside the law and grace of God? Surely not; no more than their less savage descendants of to-day; no more than we ourselves. The things they did, could, in that stage of growth,

be done without degradation, without degeneracy or corruption of the heart and mind. They were natural acts, the result, maybe, of earnest and sincere reflection. Do we count cunning and falsehood and cruelty sinful in the dweller in wild woods? Is the Arab of the waste a criminal because he is a robber, because he has fits of uncontrolled animal emotion, like an ignorant, passionate child? Do we blame lust in a monkey, or murder when done by a dog?

By the way, has the reader ever watched a dog hunt down and kill another dog in wantonness or jealousy? I have seen it done. Straight as an arrow she flew, a quarter of a mile across the grass; there was no fight, scarcely a movement of resistance, as she overtook her victim and pinned her to the earth; driving her great teeth into the other's windpipe and holding them there till breathing had ceased. It was mere murder. And she came to me immediately afterwards, tingling with satisfaction in every nerve, with no trace of uneasiness or remorse, plainly expecting that I would sing over her deed just such a song as Deborah sang over the deed of Jael.

No; the savage is a savage—and we

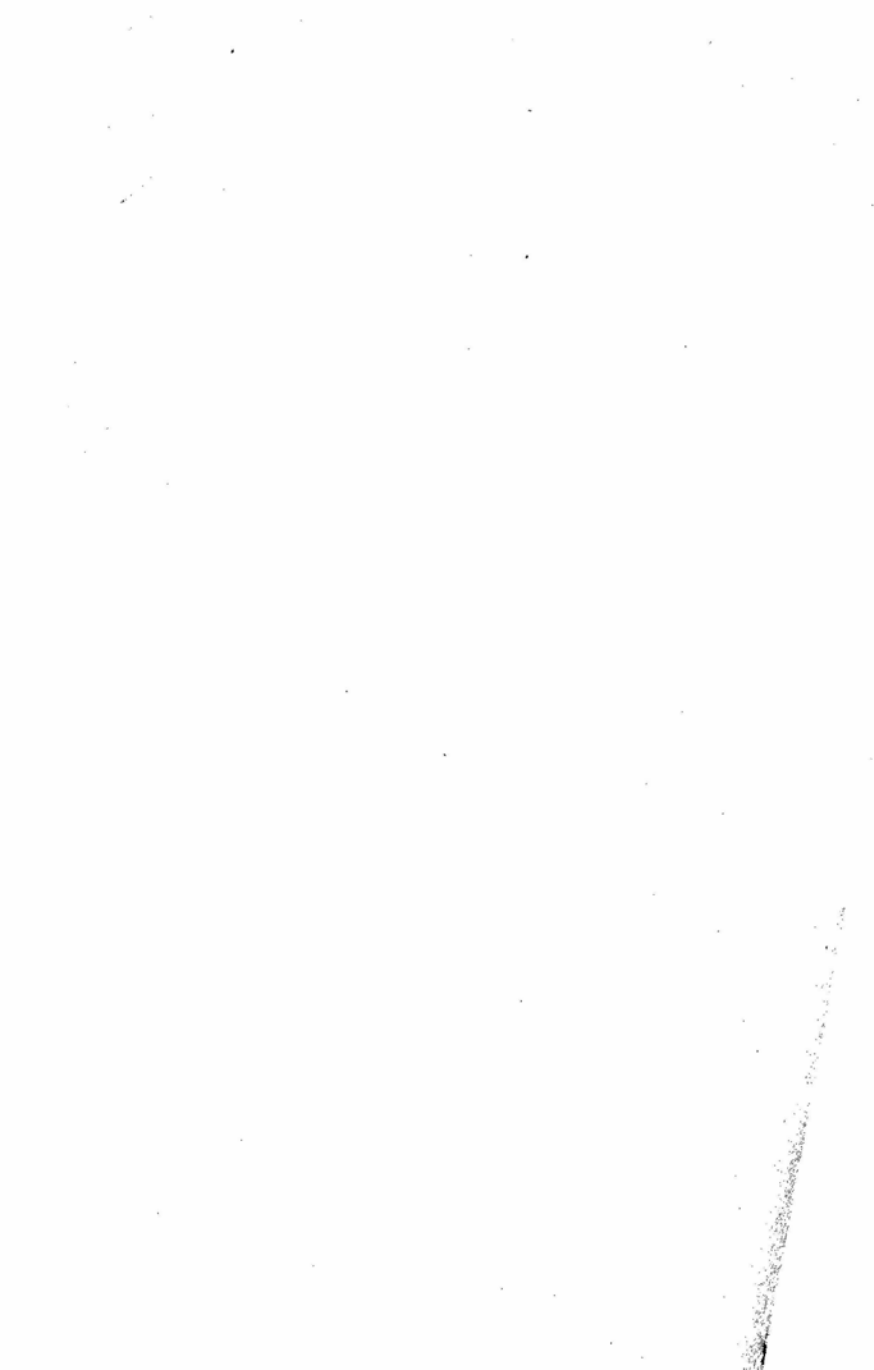
must not blame him for it. And behind the savage is the animal. At the level of monkeys and dogs those things that we reprobate most are but the natural outlet of animal activity, the evidence of abounding health or superior strength and wit. They are the natural weapons of wild, lonely things, and so long as or in the degree that men remain the wild lonely things they were at their first emergence from animal conditions, they are the deeds which men naturally do. Nature knows nothing of unconditioned moral good or moral evil. The satisfaction of impulses is a natural act, whose moral bearings depend on the time and circumstances of the doing. If a creature, human or other, satisfies its lust or cupidity or vindictiveness by inflicting humiliation or loss or suffering on another, it gets the momentary satisfaction of its animal desire, and if it is merely an animal, incapable of looking before or after, of weighing the more distant consequences of its action, there is no more to be said about it. In the measure that men outgrow the animal, in that measure they are responsible beings and moral standards become binding upon them.

And yet, though this is so, we know that in human growth this irresponsibility passes away; we

. . . believe that in all ages
Every human heart is human,
That in even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings,
For the good they comprehend not;
That the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God's right hand in that darkness
And are lifted up and strengthened.

But the Law comes later, when men unite for mutual assistance and society; it is meaningless before society begins, and in the beginnings of society, where the units are small groups, and every outsider is assumed to be a 'foe, it is rude and harsh and terrible. The things that I have described would be wrong and sinful in us, because we are no longer wild things, but have passed a few milestones of that road, have learnt a few lessons of that teaching, along which it has been appointed that we should be led, through ever-widening mutual dependence of one human group upon its neighbours (and who is my neighbour?) to fuller co-

operation and sympathy, past the imperfections of this our day, to some far-off Divine event in which the purpose and meaning of all our strivings and our blunders, our failures and our trials shall at length be made plain.



II

ANCIENT CONFUCIANISM

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT CONFUCIANISM

PRIMEVAL China was, as described in the preceding pages, an essentially barbarous country; but when authentic history begins there were already religious elements. There was belief in an over-ruling T'ien—Heaven, or God, sometimes spoken of more personally as Shang Ti, the Lord or Lords Above. There was worship of ancestors; there was worship of all manner of superhuman souls or spirits; there was some worship of the powers of nature, sacred mountains, gods of the soil and the grain, gods of the woods and streams, and so forth; there were practices of divination by the use of occult diagrams, markings on pieces of tortoise-shell or bone, etc.; there were observances connected with death and burial, always involving very heavy deprivations to the survivors and, in the case of great chieftains

or heads of tribes and clans, human and animal sacrifice on a scale varying with the dignity of the departed chief. The idea of a chief was not readily or completely dissociated from that of an ancestor, and the whole was bound up with an extreme system of family despotism, possibly inevitable as the only bulwark against perpetual violence and anarchy, in a state of society where public law had hardly begun to exist.

This primitive society, as it crystallized into a system of states, developed institutions curiously like those of the Feudal period of our own history. There was a

The Feudal
Age.

king, to whom the local chieftains—in those parts, that is the middle Huang-ho valley and adjoining regions, where population was settled and civilization relatively advanced—acknowledged some sort of deference or precedence; he being the lineal representative (“continuator,” as De Groot would call him) of the senior trunk of the same ancestral tree from whose collateral or adoptive branches most of them claimed to be descended. Most of the vassal lords traced descent from Wên Wang, the

father of Wu Wang, founder of the Chou Dynasty—traditional date, 1122 B.C.—a few affected to perpetuate the ancestral sacrifices of earlier royal lines, and all, it would seem, regarded themselves as descendants of the Patriarch Huang Ti, whose date tradition puts at 2697 B.C. But in historical times, the king had little power to secure the obedience of his vassals. Although, in theory, every vassal held direct of the crown, yet as time went on the majority became “attached” to a limited number of great chieftains, of whom they were in practice the sub-feudatories.

In some parts of the country a beginning had been made of education; arts, manufactures, and agriculture had made a certain progress—the bronze sacrificial vessels of quite the earliest historical age, for example, are of rare excellence of design and workmanship—and war was carried on by more or less disciplined armies. The people had a considerable body of legends, largely embodied in ballads or short lyrical poems, and, like other peoples before and since, imagined that there had once upon a time been a golden age of purer manners and more enlightened

government. Maybe there had been ; at least there were plentiful traditions of heroic and saintly kings of old—of Wên Wang and Wu Wang, the founders of the existing kingship ; of Ch'êng T'ang (T'ang, the Completer) who had founded an earlier line ; beyond him, the founder of a still more ancient monarchy, Yü the Great, who had restored the world from the Great Flood wherewith it had been afflicted in the days of the yet hoarier patriarchs, Yao and Shun, under whom the men of the Golden Age had lived in the peaceful practice of every virtue.

In this feudal China, in the Duchy of Lu, in what we should now call Western Shantung—in a land hallowed by old tales of Chou Kung, the founder of the Duchy, the wise and saintly brother and adviser of the beloved reforming king, Wu Wang—there was born, in the year 552 B.C., the great Sage and Master, K'ung Ch'iu, or K'ung Ch'ung-ni, or K'ung Fu-tzŭ—that is, K'ung the Philosopher—whose title has been latinized by Europeans into Confucius. He taught the people ; for some years he helped his Duke to rule the state ; he gathered disciples round him ; he studied and collected

Confucius.

the ballads and the historical records of his country. He was an archer and a devoted lover of music. After ages collected his sayings and composed moral treatises embodying his doctrine and describing his practices.

For instance, we have that very curious document, the tenth book of the Lun Yü, or "Confucian Analects," in which the personal habits of the Sage are described: how he always ate ginger with his meals, how he would not sit down if his mat was not straight, how he used to wear a sleeping suit half as long again as his body, how—sportsmanlike—he would not shoot an arrow at a bird seated. Intense veneration prompted the preservation of these memories, yet in reading one wonders whether there are many among the great, fundamental teachers of mankind for whom the like veneration would have survived so intimate a revelation of personal peculiarities.

When the Duke of Lu, cajoled and tempted by a neighbouring chieftain, was induced to fall out with Confucius, Confucius went wandering from court to court, and at length in his old age returned to his native home, died (478 B.C.), was buried, and, like all ancestors,

became in a measure an object of worship to his descendants in blood and his disciples in doctrine. Round his tomb grew up—but that was later, when his doctrines had grown to predominance—a mighty temple in a magnificent park which to-day contains the graves of many thousands of his descendants. The clan continued to live in the old home—to perpetuate by precept and example the *Hsiao* (the “filial piety”) which he had inculcated. Generation after generation its chiefs received new dignities, and for many ages they have borne the title of Duke or Prince—the present Duke, K’ung Ling-yi, being of the seventy-sixth generation in descent from the great teacher. In 1906 I had the honour of an interview with the present Duke, shortly after the birth of his heir, and some while afterwards I received an intimation of his mother’s death, date of the funeral, etc., with a long biographical notice written on a sheet of paper about thirteen feet long, giving numerous and curious details of all the presents and honours and compliments which had been conferred on the venerable lady by the great Empress Dowager Tzū Hsi, with much other information.

We see plainly enough what the underlying idea of Confucianism is; essentially it is a worship of the family, of social relationships. Confucius declared that he was a lover of antiquity, a transmitter, not a creator. His aim was to restore that higher and purer morality which he conceived to have belonged to the patriarchs and sages of old. His ideals seem to cluster round one central conception—that which he calls the *chün-tzu*—some translate it the “superior man”; perhaps the “civilized man” would suggest what he means, or the word may be taken to denote very much the group of qualities which we would express by our word “gentleman.”

Mystical and supernatural things rather repelled him; he disliked talking about them; he bids us do reverence—the usual reverence—to gods and spirits; he clearly believed and trusted in an over-ruling guidance from on high controlling his own life; but extravagance and superstition went against his grain and he avoided them, though he placed great value on the due observance of ceremonies. He declined to argue about the unknowable. Asked what he thought of death, he replied, “Not knowing life, how

can we know death?"¹ He accepted the family system of his time. One cannot help thinking that his intense conservatism tended to stereotype it; but he was always on the side of the humaner and more rational practice where there seemed to him room for choice. It was a calm, measured, reasoning spirit; just, kindly, good-humoured, eminently sensible and self-controlled; deferential to all constituted authority; reverencing manliness, yet eschewing violence and all outbursts of temper; hating war, yet, if war were inevitable, inculcating courage and the avoidance of mean spite or unfair advantages. Love those who do good to you; be just even to those who do you evil; do not do to others what you would not have others do to you; in all things be guided by the principle of reciprocity: such was the teaching of Confucius.

In its time and place surely a very great step forward in morals and in humanity.

Of his followers the greatest, Mêng Ko (Mêng-tzŭ or Mencius), lived about two hundred years afterwards, and has seemed to Western students a more practical, a less formal and

¹ See note at end of chapter.

stately but a more intelligible teacher than Confucius. In the work in which his sayings and teachings are recorded we find passages of very lofty inspiration; that, for instance, where he contrasts the nobility which is of God—mercy, truth, loyalty, to love right without wearying—with the mere human nobility of earthly rank and position, and shows how, if we pretend to strive after the former with an eye to attaining the latter, we are on the road to lose both; or that other passage where he tells us that the great man is he who does not lose his child's heart. Perhaps Mencius is more intelligible because he deals more directly with politics, and the politics of his time were more definite and interesting than those of the days of Confucius. He stands out as the great radical of that time, the upholder of the rights of the poor and the oppressed, the denouncer of all forms of greed and tyranny, the lecturer of kings and princes, to whom he preached that righteousness was a greater and more important thing than selfish ambition.

By this time the Feudal Age was passing away. The crowd of little chieftains had been

gathered up and merged into eight or nine great principalities, whose sovereigns arrogated to themselves the titles and powers of kings, and fought one with another until, some fifty years after Mencius died, they were all swallowed up under the overweening despotism of the great king of Ts'in, Ts'in Shih Huang-ti, of whose burial mound mention has already been made—and the Chinese *Empire* arose on their ruins.

The Ts'in
conquest;
250-209 B.C.

The first generation of the Empire—just about the time when Rome and Carthage were engaged in their deadly struggle in Europe—was a brutal tyranny, a reign of blood and iron in which such ideas as those of the Confucianists had but a poor reception. The Confucianist or scholar party, no doubt, on their side, did a good deal by their formalism and unreasoning attachment to whatever was ancient and “respectable” to provoke a catastrophe. At any rate the despot—the “criminal of ten thousand ages” as orthodox Chinese scholars have ever since called him—set himself to destroy them and all their works. It was decreed that all books other

Confucianism
persecuted.

than those dealing with medicine, agriculture, and magic should be ruthlessly burnt, and their possessors were put to death by hundreds. Especial efforts were made to destroy all works of history, philosophy, and poetry. How far this decree was actually carried out may be questioned, but the destruction was certainly widespread. And, in that age, before the invention of paper, when books were written or engraved, like a sort of poker work, on bamboo or wooden slabs, it would be easier to carry out than we readily realize. The matter that would fill a small pocket volume, easy to stow away, would then have spread over hundreds of bulky slabs and occupied two or three large trunks, quite impossible to conceal.

The power of the conqueror, however, ceased with his life. The six years after his death were a time of anarchy, but the work of consolidation was not permanently destroyed.

Another dynasty, that of Han, succeeded to the Imperial dignity and maintained itself on the throne, with a short interval, for four hundred years. China became the Great Power of Eastern Asia, influencing, if not as yet really ruling, all those regions which we

have in mind when we refer to-day to "China."

But from our point of view the great work of

The Han
Dynasty ; re-
conciliation of
the scholars
and the
Empire, 202
B.C. to A.D.
220.

the Han Dynasty was the reconciliation which its sovereigns effected between the Empire and the Confucian scholars. Confucianism came to be held in honour, to be a state orthodoxy. Piece by piece its literary

monuments were recovered, edited, cast into their abiding shape. The great ritual works, the Li Chi, or Book of Rites, as they are collectively called, in which the authorized customs of antiquity are recorded, were compiled. They are an immense storehouse of facts and suggestions about the manners and ideas of very ancient times, and are, no doubt, in part far older than the Han period, though the date of their editing into their permanent form cannot well be earlier than 150 or 100 B.C. A parallel may perhaps be seen here with the corresponding portion of the Jewish scriptures—the Pentateuch or Hexateuch, the Books from Genesis to Deuteronomy, the Books of the Law of Moses—which after ages revered as the authentic composition of Moses or the patriarchs, but which, as we have them, only date from a rather late period of the

Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, though they contain almost all we know of early Hebrew origins.

By the reconciliation of the Chinese State and the party of gentlemanliness and civilization, the Confucian scholars identified themselves more and more with the Empire and with all that order of ideas which regarded the Emperor as the high priest of his people. This is the age in which we can first plainly see the great permanent features and institutions of Chinese society and life—for instance, the idea of holding competitive examinations as a means of recruiting for public duty the services of the “hsien” and the “nêng” (the “worthy” and the “competent”) as Confucianists would express it—assuming shape and consistency.

From of old the sovereign had been T'ien Wang, the “Heavenly King,” or T'ien Tzŭ—
State worship and worship of the state. “Son of Heaven” or Son of God—the representative and vice-regent of the Almighty, ruling by virtue of of a T'ien Ming—a “Commission from God”—authorizing him to govern all mankind.

“T'ien wu erh Jih; Kuo wu erh Wang; Chia wu erh Chu,” says the classic text:

Heaven hath not two Suns; the land hath not two Kings; a house hath not two Masters.

Now, in a great Empire, the ideas enshrined in this creed seemed to be fully realized; the facts of the Han dominion seemed to combine with hazy traditions of ancient patriarchs and heroes, and the belief easily grew up that what visibly existed had always existed by right and in theory, if not at all times in actual reality. So, while the emperors punctiliously performed their mid-winter sacrifices at the altar of High Heaven, or their ploughing and weaving in the shrines of the Divine Husbandman or the Temple of the Earth—and while eclipses and earthquakes, floods and pestilences were held to be the symbols by which the Powers Above expressed displeasure at Imperial sins, to be averted and propitiated by Imperial prayers or pilgrimages or confessions of contrition—their subjects came to worship the sovereign as the living embodiment of a power beyond the human. Every attribute of the state was invested with a halo of sanctity; it was “shêng” (holy)—to be spoken of with bated breath, with a “changed countenance” and

"trembling knees," as we see in the tenth book of the Analects ; its edicts were to be received "with three kneelings and nine prostrations" as the commands of a God. And indeed, in any comprehensive survey of human institutions, the only one that can be compared in its duration and its influence with the Chinese Empire is the Roman Papacy, which equally claimed to be divine. But in China the Cæsar and the Pope were one individual from the first.

Yet, with all this worship of constituted authority, Confucianism supplied a powerful corrective or deterrent to the abuse of power, in its doctrine that "T'ien Ming pu tsai yü ch'ang" ("The Commission of God is not irrevocable"). When by misrule a sovereign proves his unworthiness, or by continued disaster—natural disasters counting quite as heavily as political disasters—his inability to rule, this is held to indicate that the Commission is revoked, and in that event it becomes not merely the right but the duty of a subject to rebel. Sovereignty must be Wang Tao, or "Wang Chêng," as Mencius calls it—a "Kingly Rule"; it must not degenerate into Pa Tao, "tyranny." It must

be founded on right principles, not merely supported by force; it must act in accordance with precedent, custom, and law.

By about A.D. 175, when the Han Dynasty, long sapped by the usurpations of ambitious dowagers and their families, by the

Fixing of
the Con-
fucian Canon;
A.D. 175.

intrigues of eunuchs and by countless corruptions, was sinking to its fall, and something very like the old

local feudal lordships was making ready to take its place on every hand, we find it recorded that the thirteen books of the Confucian Canon were engraved on stone tablets or pillars to secure the permanency and unalterableness of the text, and set up in a state temple. This is the close of the ancient era of Confucianism—indeed of China—the fixing of the Canon, the identification of scholarship with the State, and both with that conservative orthodoxy which has always been so attractive to the official Chinese mind.

In dealing with Confucianism I ought not to pass over, though I can only refer to them in passing, certain controversies on fundamental questions of ethics which agitated the scholars of the Classical Age. Early scholars did not always accept the conclusions of

Confucius, but, while possessing what we should call in general a Confucian outlook, sometimes took up positions very different from those of the Sage. Two of these controversies are of special importance. First, the point raised by Mo Ti (Motzŭ) that the true basis of conduct is not, as Confucius alleged, reciprocity or justice to all men, but "universal love."

The work of Mo Ti (probably fourth century B.C.) has either come down to us in a form too mutilated to do him full justice, or it was a feeble production; Mencius regarded the doctrine as impracticable and subversive—a denial of parental claims which his reverence for filial piety led him to put on a level with the notions of anarchical dreamers. Yet it continued for some centuries to find disciples and defenders. A recent native writer on Chinese history, Hsia Tsêng-yu, represents that Mo Ti's teachings existed for a while as a separate school, alongside Confucianism and Buddhism; but they failed because, while requiring entire self-abnegation, they held out no prospect of future reward for virtue or compensation for undeserved suffering. This school has naturally evoked interest among Christian students

of Chinese literature, but as far as I know they have not found the existing remains of the party of Mo Ti as helpful as they could have wished. Secondly, there was a controversy as to the Confucianist doctrine that human nature is essentially good and only becomes corrupted by circumstances. In the age of the Ts'in conquest writers and politicians, Hsün Ch'ing, Yang Chu, and others, anticipating Nietzsche and von Bernhardt, argued that the nature of man is radically bad, only to be restrained by force; that self-interest is the only real motive of action; Yang Chu being "the least erected spirit," as Legge expresses it, "who ever professed to reason concerning the life and duties of man." Others again contended that the essential nature was neutral, the mere sport of education and environment.

It would be an interesting speculation to trace out in all their ramifications the effects on human society of, respectively, the orthodox Confucian dogma that all men are by nature good, and the orthodox Christian doctrine of an original sin, implanted in the first man through his first disobedience, and transmitted as an inherited taint only to be washed out in

his descendants by the vicarious sacrifice of an innocent atoning blood. Certainly such Christian graces as humility have found Confucianism on the whole but a stony ground, yet its teaching—

Jên chih ch'u hsing pên shan
(Man's beginning, a nature at root virtuous),

which Chinese children learn as the first line of their school primer, has nobility and hopefulness to its credit.

NOTE.

CONFUCIAN RETICENCE REGARDING DEATH.

Legge and others have censured Confucius for the answer which he gave to Chi Lu's famous inquiry regarding death, seeing in it a burking, or evasion, of a most important question.

But Confucius never claimed omniscience; he acknowledged with singular frankness that his own progress had been the slow growth of many years. The Analects, in which his sayings are recorded, are for the most part so scrappy and innocent of any trace of system that it is perhaps dangerous to found any argument upon the order in which these memoranda are dotted down. Yet, just at this place, there does seem to be a consecutive train of thought, and it may be fair, before passing a judgment, to consider the passage as a whole.

Here it is (Lun Yü, Book XI, sections 8 to 11):—

8. When Yen Yüan died the Master cried, "Alas, Heaven is killing me! Heaven is killing me!"

9. When Yen Yüan died the Master wept for him excessively. The disciples said, "Master, your grief is

excessive." He said, "Is it excessive? For whom may I mourn excessively if not for this man?"

10. When Yen Yüan died the disciples wished to give him a sumptuous funeral. The Master said, "You may not." The disciples did give him a sumptuous funeral. The Master said, "Oh, Hui!" (personal name of Yen Yüan). "He looked on me as a father; I have been unable to treat him as a son. It is not I, it is you, surely, my two or three disciples, who are at fault."

11. Chi Lu asked about serving ghosts and spirits. The Master said, "We have not been able to serve the living; how can we serve ghosts?" Chi Lu added, "I venture to ask about death." "We have not known life; how can we know death?"

Does the whole passage, after all, amount to anything more than a record of what Confucius felt and said under the influence of exceeding grief at the death of a dearly loved disciple; and if so, can it be fairly judged as though representing his reasoned, deliberate opinion?

III

TAOISM

CHAPTER III

TAOISM

THE preceding chapter gives, I hope, an idea of what classical Confucianism stands for, and

Taoism; a name covering all those elements which Confucianism dislikes.

it will be realized that, powerful as the appeal of such a system may be, whether we meet it in the lofty moralizing wisdom of Mencius or the puerilities of the "Twenty-four

Examples of Filial Piety," it cannot answer all the needs of humanity. It is, after all, but one mood of Chinese nature. When he is at ease, in the possession of health and waking senses, with his home in order, busy with his daily task, man readily takes the Confucian view of things. It deals with visible facts; it is formal; it values self-restraint, order, ceremonious correctness of deportment; it cultivates propriety. But when work is done, when shadows play upon the walls and the night winds howl outside, this same man huddles with his comrades

on the warm stove-bed, and they talk together of strange, uncanny happenings ; for then there are spooks abroad, and the mind becomes filled with wonder, imagination, fear, and all sorts of fancy.

We have seen that Confucius avoided and disliked mysticism in all its forms, though not always distinctly rejecting it. Yet ancient China was full of mystics, ascetic recluses or jovial tramps, living the simple life in solitary places—like the dreamers on whom Mencius inflicted his searching dissertation regarding the necessity and usefulness of a division of labour—or earning a livelihood among the multitude by interpreting dreams and omens, by pretensions to magical skill, by practising hypnotism, by working miracles, by holding communion with all kinds and orders of spiritual beings. Everywhere man is surrounded by mystery ; everywhere there are men who believe themselves to be, or are believed by others to be, endowed with the faculty of seeing farther than their fellows into the heart of those things which are hidden from the ordinary channels of human knowledge.

That is the order of ideas which is at the

root of *Tao Chiao*—Taoism. It is not a purely Chinese phenomenon; indeed you have only to go down any back street in any town in England or Wales and buy a Zadkiel's Almanack, and you will find that Taoism of the purest water flourishes in the midst of our civilization. It flourishes, I may add, in drawing-rooms as well as in back streets.

What is special to China is that among the Chinese Taoism has become rather more systematized than elsewhere; in itself it is just the reflection of the universal human craving to dabble with the occult.

In China it is everywhere, high and low. In 1890 there was a very trying spell of hot, dry weather; harvest prospects were seriously endangered. So the Emperor and many high officials left Peking and proceeded to a certain temple, whence they escorted in state to the city a certain miracle-working *t'ieh p'ai-tzu*, an oblong slab of iron about four inches long, that is usually kept in a well there, but which, on exposure to the heat of the sun, becomes a weather-compelling talisman. The *t'ieh p'ai-tzu* worked its miracle all too thoroughly; for the next

six weeks or so rain was continuous and excessive; the country was badly flooded. Thereupon a little land snake, which was being carried down on some flood-borne rubbish past Tientsin, was seized upon as an incarnation of Lung Wang, the Water God. The snake was lodged in a temple where the Viceroy of Chihli—the famous Li Hung-chang—and all the provincial officials visited it and burnt incense before it till the floods abated.

Seven years later, in Shashih in Hupei, during the typhus epidemic of 1897, it was announced that a great ten-headed crow was hovering over the town. One of its heads had been cut off, and wherever the blood from the severed neck fell on a house, the inmates were sure to get typhus and die. Accordingly a day was appointed on which everybody was to burn fire-crackers and incense-sticks on his doorstep to propitiate the bird, and I heard of an instance where a certain native, who regarded the affair as superstitious vanity in which he declined to take part, was served with an immediate notice to quit from his landlord. And surely the processions and drum-beating that occur

during eclipses of the sun—whereby the sun is saved from being devoured by the “Heavenly dog,” however much the extensive preliminaries required for getting up these performances may depend on previous study of the calendar—belong to the same order of ideas.

Obviously the origins of Taoism are to be sought in the remotest barbaric past ; it is no new invention, though every **Mythology.** age and place has had its special variations of the tune. In the course of time it has developed an immense mythology—belief in all manner of gods, bogeys, and demons : Yü Huang, the Jewelled Emperor of the Sky, with his court of attendant divinities ; the god of health, whose shrine, alas ! at Kiukiang, is but a small one beside the majestic temple dedicated, next door, to the spirit of small-pox ; the Eight Immortals, a merry crew, about whom so many traditions are afloat, and whose images are everywhere ; river spirits and mountain spirits ; star spirits who guide the influences of the planets and heavenly bodies ; patron deities of all kinds of trades and occupation, like the kitchen god who has to be fed, bamboozled, and treated

at New Year, lest he send a too incriminating report up the chimney; Lu P'an the god of carpenters; the spinning maiden who resides in the star Vega but meets her lover across the Milky Way once a year; local spirits of all sorts, such as the Ch'êng Huang, or "tutelary angels," whose temples will be found in every Chinese town; T'u-ti, or earth spirits that watch over the crops; marvellous monsters and animals, snakes and dragons and unicorns, cranes and phoenixes, tigers and monkeys, magpies, foxes and tortoises, which symbolize long life or prosperity, or announce the birth of sages and heroes, or convey messages of wondrous import to mankind, or merely serve as local or tribal totems; not forgetting T'an, the beast of covetousness, whose image is painted on the walls of yamens, as a warning to their inmates against the too prevalent weakness of official personages.

Then there is the belief in magic numbers, developed into a wonderful system of categories and diagrams, held to be
Magic. the summary and crown of all knowledge and wisdom—an immense playground wherein the imagination of mankind

has run riot for a hundred generations, or however long it may be since the "dragon-horse" presented the patriarch Fu Hsi with the "river plan" of eight diagrams, whose amplification into sixty-four double diagrams is the foundation of that enigmatical "Book of Changes"—the Yi Ching—which Confucius edited and tried to rationalize, but which neither he, nor Terrien de Lacouperie, who said it was a glossary of Accadian words, nor those who say it is a calculation of the value of π to five hundred places of decimals, nor, we imagine, any one else, has ever succeeded in making much sense of.

Medicine in China has never freed itself from the empire of Taoist ideas: charms and incantations; precious stones or rare herbs; drugs concocted of every strange, generally of every nauseous and horrible and terrifying, thing—like the contents of the witches' caldron in "Macbeth"—are all mixed up with suggestion and faith-healing into a hotch-pot that defies analysis or description.

I myself have not seen much of devil-possession, but it appears to be a common belief. Once, in a village near Ichang in Hupei, I came upon a freshly severed child's

head lying in the roadway by some cottages. Inquiry as to how it came there had to be conducted with some caution, so as not to awake suspicion, but a messenger whom I asked to find out the facts returned with the tale that the villagers reported that the child, a boy of some three or four years, had been rightfully put to death by his parents because the bewitching, sickening, and death of several other children in the village had been traced to a demon which resided in him.

All manner of diseases, mental and physical, are held to be caused by the presence of evil spirits, who must be frightened away by noise and burning of crackers or burnt out by scaring the skin with red-hot copper coins, but the case above related is the only instance of murder as a penalty for witchcraft that I have met with.

An amazing collection of rules have been handed down from of old, and are still appealed to, for the holding of inquests; for example, to determine whether an accused person is criminally implicated in the death of a person found dead, place a few drops of the blood of each in a saucer; if the drops coalesce, there is guilt; if not, it is an

evidence of innocence. Somewhat similar approximations to our old Saxon trial by ordeal may be found in use to decide whether relationship in blood exists between two persons, or to substantiate or clear up a charge of adultery, and in one case I knew of it was proposed to determine by ordeal which of several suspected persons was the one on whom a charge of theft should be fastened.

Then there is the so-called science of physiognomy, whose adepts profess to inspect the character and foretell the fortune of their clients by examining their faces; we have something like that in England, too, by the way. Magic, divination, witchcraft, love potions and hate potions, fortune-telling, the reading of horoscopes and dreams, alchemy, the making of elixirs of life, the reading of the stars, the study of portents and omens of all sorts—all this, and much else, is the stock in trade of the Taoist.

But, above all, he is a professor of Fêng-shui, the art of "Wind and Water"—geomancy, as some translate the word.

Fêngshui. This is an order of ideas only less deeply ingrained in the Chinese mind than the worship of ancestors; indeed, the

two run into one another in all manner of ways. It is assumed that good and evil fortune depend in some subtle and mysterious manner upon the situation of things. Fêngshui, we are assured, travels in straight lines. Good Fêngshui can be attracted and evil Fêngshui deflected by the conformation of hills, rivers, and buildings. A little blank wall, built as a screen opposite the gateway of a house or courtyard, will protect it from evil influences coming from that particular side. It is most important that the walls and gates of cities should be laid out with due reference to Fêngshui. If the surrounding hills do not attract the right Fêngshui, a pagoda may have to be built as a sort of lightning-conductor to counteract their evil effects. It is very unlucky to live in a house so placed that it faces down a cross street. Should it be necessary to incur the risk of occupying such a dwelling, the occupier will be careful to procure a stone from T'aishan or some other holy mountain and have it inserted in his building, facing the unpropitious roadway, with an inscription: "The stone from T'aishan accepts the responsibility." The objection to tall houses and church

spires, so widely prevalent in China, mainly depends on consideration for Fêngshui, which such constructions are considered liable to spoil. It is often found in China that the rents of houses favourably situated in regard to Fêngshui are very considerably higher than those of otherwise equally desirable dwellings. A house built on the extreme top of a hill, although itself perhaps commanding the very best of Fêngshui, may fail altogether to find a tenant, for no one will dare to provoke the resentment of those whose Fêngshui may be damaged by the interposition of such a building between them and their accustomed Fêngshui outlook. As has been said, where we should think of drainage and subsoil, access to railways, a sunny south aspect, or "ancient lights," a Chinese thinks of Fêngshui.

But the chief function of Fêngshui and its professors is to determine the location and proper construction of graves; indeed the ideas are so much identified that in some districts the word "Fêngshui," or its Fukienese equivalent "Hongshui," has come to bear the meaning of a grave. Where it is believed that the welfare of descendants depends upon

the reverence that they pay to the last resting-places of their ancestors, it is obvious that graves must be carefully planned and located so as to secure, both for their occupants and for the survivors, every possible comfort and advantage that favourable Fêngshui can afford. A grave must be in the right place; it must be planted with the right kind of trees; it must be a work of art whose making calls for the skilled advice of a professional expert. I have known a case where about £300 was paid as a fee for selecting a suitable grave-site for a wealthy family. Indeed, the profession of a *Fêngshui Hsien-shêng* is not without its rewards!

It is common knowledge that the Chinese are apt to be mercilessly victimized by their professors of Fêngshui; it must involve an annual outlay of several million pounds; an annual loss, through all the otherwise productive activities that it renders unproductive, of millions more. Fêngshui, with its attendant belief in earth dragons, etc., has much to say about locating springs of water, veins of metal, mines, etc., generally by way of restraining all such grubbing in the recesses of mother-earth, and so has been one of the most

potent causes of the opposition to the opening up of the mineral resources of China and to the construction of railways.

Yet, fanciful as are the forms in which it is expressed, it is impossible to regard so deep a feeling as the Chinese Fêngshui sentiment as merely a piece of self-deception. It must stand for something deep down in Chinese consciousness; and who can doubt what that something is? Surely it is the sentiment of the sanctity of old familiar home surroundings. The very hills and streams of our little world have made each of us what we are; there is attached to our memories of them a fund of tender associations which it is sacrilege to uproot. They lie very near the base of much that is most inspiring and most permanent in human relationships. Without them we should certainly be something other, very likely something worse, than we actually are. None of us like to have the scenes among which we grew up, still less the places which are sanctified by the memories of those who lived before us, wantonly invaded and defaced by modern utilitarian vulgarities. I lately came across the suggestion that much of the British objection to the making of the

proposed Channel Tunnel is essentially due to a belief in Fêngshui, though we in England have not learned to call it by that name. Britain would, it was maintained, be just as safe with the tunnel as far as actual danger of attack goes, but she would lose the propitious Fêngshui that comes of insularity.

The Taoist outlook on life is, in fact, one common all the world over. You have but to contemplate the phenomena of Bond Street, or of Epping Forest on a Bank Holiday, to see that among us there are persons of all grades who live upon Taoism. Some gather sixpences from shop-girls; some fly to higher game; but their methods are much the same, the temper of mind they minister to is very similar to those which we find in China. Now and then we may find it in far more dignified company. The last time that I was in Paris I was given a handful of tracts about Saint Anthony of Padua. From these it appeared that the Saint undertook the recovery of lost property: so many candles, so many intercessions; so much expenditure of money and devotion, and such and such articles could be restored to their owners; it was all scheduled like a tradesman's price list.

But again, is it all nonsense? We begin with those who dare not sit down thirteen to table; that is quite on the Taoist level. By and by we come to those who attach an importance to points of the compass which reason quite fails to explain. They would be very uncomfortable, perhaps doubtful of the efficacy of worship, in a church whose altar was elsewhere than at the east end of the building. And many more would be seriously ill at ease, even deeply offended, if their dead were not buried in ground consecrated by the ministers of their Church and reserved for its members alone. We may say that these notions are inconsistent with enlightened faith in the universality of God, but we cannot mock them; they are deep, they are real. Yet they are in line with the Chinese Fêngshui in its insistence upon the importance of the situation of things, especially of graves.

An important consequence of the belief in Fêngshui is that permanent burial, in China, has frequently to be delayed for months or years, until a satisfactory site has been found and prepared, leading to the use of immensely heavy, air-tight coffins, and their storage in extensive mortuaries in places accounted lucky

for this purpose. At Hangchow, for instance, one sees long rows of such establishments—regular villages or towns of the dead. In all parts of China one comes upon encoffined bodies stored in temples, or, often enough, merely deposited in open fields, either bricked over or exposed to the wind and weather, for years it may be, till the boards rot and the contents are scattered abroad—awaiting burial! That such sights should be so common as they are in a country whose people profess such veneration for their dead as the Chinese do, is surely a curious example of the incongruity of human nature—it is mainly a result of Fêngshui.

All Chinese life is permeated with Taoist fancy: the symbolism of Chinese art depends on it; Chinese poetry is full of it; all Chinese legend and folklore teems with it. Turn over the pages of such a collection of fairy tales as the "Liao Chai" of P'u Sung-ling. Professor Giles has translated a good many of them. What a wealth of Taoist imagination has gone to the creation of the weird world to which they introduce us! Holidays and festivals; the practices observed at New Year; the feast of lanterns; the pro-

Popular
Taoism.

cessions to "meet the spring"; the spring festival of Ch'ing Ming, when the graves are decorated; the summer "dragon boat" regattas; the mid-autumn celebrations on the 15th of the 8th moon; the parading of the streets with immense paper dragons—after a fire, for instance; the weird parading of the town "Ch'êng Huang" in a decorated sedan chair, amid howling and half-naked crowds, who turn round and kneel in the road at intervals as he passes along streets where every door is adorned with green branches, during time of drought—all these and a hundred other things are unintelligible unless our minds are accustomed to the Taoist outlook on life. The Chinese drama is profoundly Taoist; it is, perhaps, as organizers of outdoor theatricals that the Taoist priesthood enjoys its greatest popularity. Every village has its holy grove or spring; its sacred tree decked out with votive offerings or written prayers; its ancient weather-beaten stone fallen from heaven or handed down since no one knows when; its dragon pool or its white deer grotto, round which cluster the memories of ancient sages or hermits, or tales of fairy marvel, of healing or of terror, that it would require many a volume to tell and explain in full.

Such is popular Taoism. It is an atmosphere that pervades childish and simple peoples all the world over—their joys and their fears, their holidays and their daily task. I think that we have all breathed it sometime, not only those who have seen it in China. Survivals of its observances live everywhere, as decorations round the festivals of far more cultured creeds. But if we would know their origin, it is not to the thoughtful and self-conscious that we should turn, but to the “pagans,” the “heathen,” the country folk, who, roaming over the heath and the wild wood, longest resisted the voice of civilization and artificiality. All over the world every unsophisticated person is often, every person with a touch of poetry or sentiment in him is sometimes, at heart a Taoist.

In the midst of Taoism there has arisen—as in many other forms of mysticism—a Philosophy. Many will tell you that this is the genuine, original teaching of the Taoists; that the mass of legends and superstitions appeals to credulity and dabbling with occult things, are only a depraved aberration, a later, comparatively modern, corrup-

Mystical
Philosophy of
Taoism.

tion of what began in the high and ethereal doctrines connected with the half-fabulous name of Lao-tzŭ—the “Old Philosopher,” whose chief earthly incarnation is reputed to have occurred shortly before the time of Confucius. The two are, indeed, said to have met. They did not appreciate one another. To Confucius, Lao-tzŭ seemed to be a “dragon” whose flights no man could foretell. And later there was Chuang-tzŭ, with his dissertations on the philosophical quietism of Lieh-tzŭ; but whether Lieh-tzŭ ever lived, or is only a creation of Chuang-tzŭ’s dreams, who shall tell? Have they not all long since passed to the Islands of the Genii, or the Western Heaven, where Hsi-wang-mu reigns over the sunset summits of K’un Lun?

To Lao-tzŭ is attributed a little book, the “Tao-Tê Ching”—the “Classic of the Way and of Virtue,” or, as we might say, the “Doctrine of the WAY.”

The “Tao-Tê Ching.”

Every religious teaching has adopted this metaphor of a WAY. Taoism has made of it its central and deepest conception. In Taoist piety, TAO, the Way, is that which guides, controls, inspires, precedes, causes all things—the end and purpose as well

as the means of all existence, the path of quietude, the Way of Peace.

The opening words of this little treatise are—

Tao k'o tao, fei ch'ang Tao ; Ming k'o ming, fei ch'ang Ming.

(The Way that can be expressed is not the Eternal Way ;
The Name that can be named is not the Eternal Name.)

The closing verse reads—

T'ien chih Tao, li erh pu hai ; Shêng-jên chih Tao, wei erh pu chêng.

(The Way of God is to bless and not injure ;
The Way of the Holy men is conduct and not controversy.)

There is something in these words that goes to the root of things, that tells of the limitation and fallibility of all human expression ; something, too, that might well serve as a definition of the true, holy, universal catholic Church, or of that communion of saints in which Christians profess to believe.

One is often tempted to see in Taoism nothing but a riotous chaos of childish superstitions ; it introduces us to a word of illusive, undefinable imagery, where reason often gropes

in vain for any foothold of sober common sense ; yet, after all, there is a higher element. Whatever its origin may be, or the date of its production ; whether it be, indeed, the work of Lao-tzŭ, or whether, as some contend, it is a reflection of some Buddhist or early Christian influence of many centuries later, there is about the Tao-Tê Ching—as about other literature of its class—a depth of feeling for the intenser questionings of the human soul that is absent from the stately classicalism of the Confucian school. If not of the earth earthy, Confucianism is of the home homely ; of the State stately ; Taoism at its best soars into a region of high and ethereal things. Little of it has truth as the laboured transcript of positive, external fact—facts and dates are not the sort of thing that appeal to man in his Taoist mood—but as poetry it has a truth that goes straight to the heart of nature and of man.

In course of time Taoism developed a regular priesthood, whose head, called T'ien

**The Taoist
Papacy.**

Shih, is a kind of Pope, whose see is at Shang Ch'ing Kung in the Province of Kiangsi. Each successive Pope is believed to be a reincarnation of a certain Chang Tao-ling, a mystic of the first

and second centuries A.D., who, after a life of marvels, concocted and swallowed a magic elixir and attained to immortality at the ripe age of 122. At any rate the Papacy seems to go back authentically to about A.D. 400, and has had something like its modern importance ever since the munificent endowment of the see by the Emperor Sung Chên-Tsung (A.D. 998 to 1023), that is, for some nine hundred years.

I have never actually met the Pope of the Taoists, but when I was at Kiukiang I saw his sedan chair, draped in crimson and surmounted by a gilded, flame-like ornament, carried through the streets as he passed by on his way to visit Peking, where I believe his influence was exerted to make peace after the Boxer troubles. The present Pope seems to be a man of enlightened ideas, who has not scorned to take a share in certain conferences or exchanges of views on religious topics in Shanghai, in connection with Christian and educational endeavour there.

I cannot leave the subject of Taoism without a reference to what I may call, for want of a better word, Sects—guilds or fraternities, at any rate, bound together by participation in

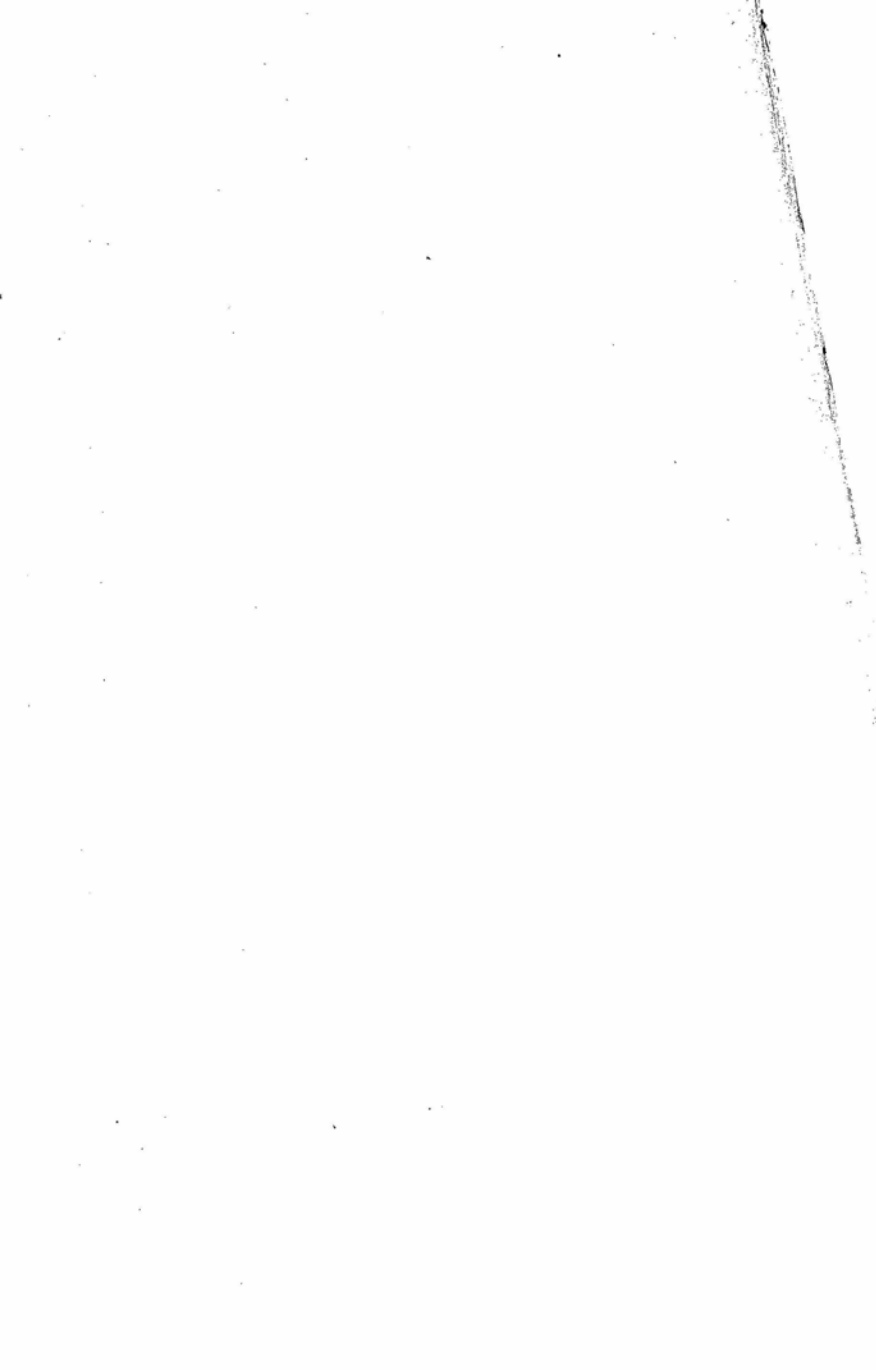
some sort of religious or magical rites. These may be merely "blood fraternities," as among the native tribes of Formosa, where brotherhood is attained by mutual injection of a little of one another's blood; or they may be social clubs of a festive character; or they may be organizations very similar to that of Freemasonry among ourselves: such societies as the San-ho Hui, or "Three Harmonies" Society, appear to be mainly of such a character; or they may be essentially gambling associations, with a little spiritualism and fortune-telling thrown in, as, for instance, the Cantonese "White Pigeon" Society, or "White Pigeon" Lottery. Again, there are sects like the Tsai-li Hui, that profess strict vegetarian, teetotal, and anti-tobacconist principles, but are at times suspected of mixing them up, not only with a good deal of fanaticism, but with a certain laxity as to the observance of the sixth, seventh, and eighth Commandments, even to be the exciting force behind popular convulsions and rebellions. Others are in essence Trades Unions. Thus, in all parts of China, traders from the Province of Fukien or who have relations with that

Sects or
Fraternities.

province, meet in the temples of T'ien Hou, the Queen of Heaven, and are under her patronage. Or again, there is the Ko-lao Hui, which was so largely implicated in the riots and risings of 1891—in its origin an association of soldiers' clubs, bound together to agitate for the redress of certain military grievances, but gradually developing into a quasi-political, or perhaps I should say anarchical party, seriously endangering the internal tranquillity as well as the foreign relations of the whole Chinese Empire.

Constantly, in these associations, there is found a tendency to pass from mere fraternity or mutual assistance to dark channels of mystery and intrigue. All these societies are frowned upon by the civil powers; most of them are illegal, many of them are, or at times have been, unquestionably implicated in highly criminal practices. They are the happy hunting ground of every sort of superstitious delusion, the hotbed and forcing-house of fanaticism, often of greed, cruelty, and all forms of terrorism and violence. Again and again, as during the decline of the Ming Dynasty in the first half of the seventeenth century, or later, from about 1797 onwards, so soon as the Manchu

Empire showed signs of weakening, almost continuously to our own times, Chinese society has been honeycombed by the machinations of these so-called "Secret Societies." Not only in China has it been found necessary to repress them, but in our own colonies, in the Malay Peninsula, or wherever a Chinese population has settled they have had to receive the attentions of the police. Their lodges breathe the sort of atmosphere in which such phenomena as Boxerism take their rise, where millions of people become persuaded that by practising certain kinds of drill they can render themselves invulnerable to the weapons of all enemies, and end by inflicting the miseries of civil war, ruin, and anarchy on entire provinces, even in shaking the very foundations of the Chinese state.



IV

CHINA

AND

BUDDHISM



CHAPTER IV

CHINA AND BUDDHISM

I HAVE said that Confucianism is of the home
homely ; it belongs to the family, to the
Buddhism. ordered ways of a settled society.

It cultivates the amenities and some
of the elegances of a cultured life ; it finds
its centre round the ancestral shrine, its
piety clusters about the resting-places of the
dead. Taoism deals more freely with the
mysteries of nature and the soul, with
emotions of poetry and of wonder, of quietism
and of terror. Yet there are wide areas of
human need to which neither of these schools
or tendencies of Chinese thought appeals.
Different as are the moods of the soul to
which they respectively minister, both agree
in assuming personal life, personal advance-
ment, the development of natural faculties,
the gratification of personal wishes, to be in
themselves good things ; things perhaps to

be controlled by regard for others, yet in their place to be desired and sought after. Both seek happiness in success—to win something; in one case the enjoyment of a well-ordered, peaceful private and public life, where relative duties are suitably fulfilled, in the other the enjoyment of good luck, culminating in blissful absorption into the ranks of genii or immortals. To both life, the prolonging and expanding of life and energy, are good things, wherein we have a right to find personal satisfaction. But there is another mood of the soul: a mood wherein we crave no longer to live for ourselves, but if at all only for others; when we seek to rest and to forget; when desires seem vain things and renunciation the highest virtue; and wherever this mood prevails neither the Confucian nor the Taoist outlook suffices. So a third religion comes in to supplement them—the imported Indian system of Buddhism.

It is generally believed that the teachings of the Gautama Buddha, Sakya Muni—Shih-chia Mu-ni Fo-yeh, as he is called in Chinese—percolated into China by way of Central Asia at a very early date. But the first clear reference to them is the tale, authentic

or legendary, of the Emperor Han Ming-Ti, who is alleged to have been visited in the year A.D. 65 by a dream regarding a golden image to be found somewhere in the West. He sent an embassy to discover and bring to China this golden marvel, and, after years of wandering, his envoys returned from India bearing with them the Buddhist Sutra or Scripture known as the Sutra of the Forty-two Sections.

Be this as it may, Indian religion, with its mission priests and its books—and with abundance of gilded images—come into China; but I very much doubt whether the philosophical, speculative, theoretic side of Buddhism ever greatly affected Chinese thought. Whatever may be true of individuals, there is little in the popular Buddhist worship found in China to connect it with the mental outlook of our “esoteric Buddhists” and Theosophists. Buddhism came as a faith for the multitude, as a rule of life for the devout, as a consolation, much more than as a philosophy for the cultured.

The time came when the great Han Empire declined and perished. For four hundred years China passed through ages of

strife and disruption ; renewal of feudal anarchy ; division into three kingdoms for ever at war one with another ; then a momentary and nominal union, broken up by civil dissensions and barbarian invasions ; a long era of separation between the North and the South, each convulsed by constant rebellions, revolutions, and dismemberments, one political system following another amid kaleidoscopic changes whose details it would be wearisome to relate. In those times of anarchy and confusion literature and learning languished, general civilization—the rather hard, formal, matter-of-fact civilization of Han times—made little or no progress ; states and communities rarely crystallized into that ordered way of life which Confucian society requires and assumes, population and wealth were stationary or dwindled away. War and violence were everywhere, all old ties were daily broken up ; mankind, after a great experiment in organized life, seemed in danger of relapsing into barbarism again.

But there was one refuge for troubled souls. A message had come among the Chinese from India, telling them of renunciation of all the vain pageantries of this world : to

The Dark
Ages, A.D. 190
to 590.

retire into the forest glades ; to live there a life of pious meditation, of celibacy ; to don the rustic garb of a monk ; to shave the head ; to flee from the cares of that public life whose ambitions led only to bitterness, of that family life that might so easily become a scene of sorrow and bereavement ; to forget name and race and personality ; to subdue all lusts and earthly passions, whether of love or hate, all desires, all selfish wishes ; to leave the village where fire and bloodshed were so often the reward of toil ; to abstain from the taking of all life, animal life as well as human life ; to chant the liturgies of the strange Indian ritual till the mind was benumbed by repetition of sounds ; finally, when death brought perfect release from the terrors and hazards of this sad and sin-stained world, not to harbour a mass of fleshly corruption in a pompous grave as the Confucianists did, but to commit this corruptible body to the purifying flames in the expectation that the soul would pass on one stage farther in its long journey of transmigrations to the Nirvana of Buddhahood, to the final absorption where Self ceases to exist.

Monasticism.
The ascetic
life.

To the active and strong Buddhism offered travel and a life of adventure as a missionary all over Asia. To the sinful it held out the prospects of buying pardon by works of piety, or threatened the penalties of a dread underworld of purgatory, the judgment-seat of Yen-Wu (Yama), the hill of knives, the glowing column of fire, the wheel of the law whose turning causes bad men to be re-incarnated as beasts ; to the multitude the glamour of splendid services, images and incense, or the excitements of popular pilgrimages to hallowed, miracle-working shrines, the amusement of accumulating merit by feeding, catching, and releasing again the immense, fat carp with black and golden scales, kept stocked for the purpose in the temple pond : to all, a communion of inward tranquillity unshaken by the storms either of worldly greatness or worldly failure—peace to the weary ; sainthood to the devout lovers of the gentle Buddha and his law.

Why should men strive and wrangle, wearying their bodies and hardening their souls, in the vain pursuit of gain or of ambition ? Does not spring still clothe the hills in her azalea carpet of crimson and

gold, and was ever emperor arrayed in glory such as hers? Why need we toil through the heat of summer, when overhead the squirrels frolic on the pine boughs and at our feet are limpid streams, along whose margin the lizards disport themselves happily in the chequered sunshine? Can the hustling life of cities yield such wine and such delicacies as they enjoy? When the autumn air is heavy with the fragrance of the kuei-hua, and the woods and fields yield their ripened fruits, who would leave the quiet of a rustic life to dwell in the courts of kings? What do they know of the fairyland of winter whose eyes are not familiar with the spotless snow of untrodden mountains, whose ears are not filled with the rude music of the forest storm? To the simple and humble of heart all nature and all seasons spoke of Buddha and of peace.

Wherever a haunted grove evoked memories of the storied past, there was built a temple or monastery whose bell called the faithful to prayer. There the gong sounded as the first grey of morning lighted the wraiths of mist among the cryptomerias, and anon the droning of chants that might

be taken for gregorian chants echoed across the valley as sunlight gleamed on the feathery bamboos, the shamu, the spreading banyan of the south, or the cypress and white pine of some northern sanctuary. Everywhere pagodas arose to enshrine the relics of Gautama and his saints. The names and images of Buddha and the Bodhisattvas were carved on every grey cliff; hundreds of them flew to Hangchow from the western shores of sunset and lodged themselves miraculously in the niches of the rocks, where you may see them to this day; the glory of Buddha was made visible in the sunset reflections round the cloud-capped summit of Omei, and on many another mountain, while by the waves and islands of the sea the surges beating on the shores of P'uto droned their accompaniment to the never-ending chorus of monkish prayer and praise. In all the wild and lonely haunts of the birds and beasts, in the Temple of the "Purple Cloud," on the rock of the "Great Orphan," standing alone on the waters of the Poyang Lake, men came to live at one with nature and their own souls.

In such retreats, age after age, the

faithful have been found willing to devote their lives to the practice of the Buddhist rule of life, after a period of instruction and preparation to endure the torture of the ordination service which is to part them for ever from the world. Kneeling in rows before the altar, little cones of inflammable powder (moxa), generally nine in number, but sometimes twelve or more, are placed upon their newly shaven heads, and, as each vow is pronounced, of obedience, poverty, chastity, renunciation of kith and kin, abstinence from flesh, etc., each of these cones is successively set alight to brand that promise ineffaceably upon the person of the devotee. At first the pain is endured in stoic silence, but with each succeeding burning it becomes more and more necessary to drown the cries of the agonized and fainting future monks and nuns under the beating of drums and gongs and singing of loud chants by the attendant ministers of this weird solemnity.

The assertion is sometimes heard that the Buddhist priesthood is largely recruited from criminals, outlaws, and social failures. Perhaps it may be so. Once a Buddhist monk told me his life-history, and why he had

taken the vows. It was in 1896, at a small temple dependent upon the great T'ien Mu Shan monastery, on the border between Chêkiang and Anhui, a wild and beautiful region of lofty mountains, clothed in magnificent cryptomeria forests, perhaps more frequented in old days than now. For, though the place is a resort of pilgrims at stated seasons, the whole neighbourhood had been so ravaged during the T'aip'ing devastation that even then, in 1896, after nearly forty years, all the surrounding villages were in ruins, the roads mostly choked with jungle, and so infested with robbers that innkeepers kept spears lashed to the bedsteads in their guest rooms for the use of travellers who should pass the night in their humble hosteleries. This monk told me that, twenty-six years before, he had lived "in the world," as a young man of good family and prospects, somewhere in Kiangsi, but that, unfortunately, he had had a violent altercation with the father of a young lady of those parts to whom he was betrothed. The result was that the family broke off relations with him, and he became a monk, living ever since in various places, which he described, and

eventually drifting to T'ien Mu Shan. The monastic life had, he said, this advantage—that there were always superiors to order him where to go and what to do instead of leaving him to the risks of following his own will.

I have seen this religion in many provinces, in Fukien, in Chêkiang, in Anhui, in Hupei, in Kiangsi, in Shantung, in Manchuria, on the hills behind Peking. I have breathed the air of it in scores of villages, among a rustic, simple people, where thirty miles is reckoned a long day's journey, and I know that in such surroundings it is a beautiful and real faith, supplying human needs. I have also seen it in great popular pilgrim centres in the environs of great cities, real still to many of the folk who come, yet mixed and tainted with mendicancy, impudence, tawdriness, and sham, for the true delicacy of it all is stifled in the bustle of a crowded, active world. It is not to be learnt from books—though who can deny that the works of Fielding Hall, for instance, reveal the very soul of the people of Burma and breathe the spirit of true Buddhism?—but in the shadow of its own sanctuaries, in the silence of the hills.

So it grew all through those dark and troublous times from the fall of the Han,

The Patri-
archate,
A.D. 526-730.

A.D. 190, to the reunion of China under the Sui Dynasty in A.D. 590—especially in the last century of that time, the age when Bodhidarma, the twenty-eighth and last Indian patriarch of the Church, transferred the patriarchate to Chinese shores and engaged in pious controversy with the Monk-Emperor, Wu-Ti of the Liang Dynasty, about the respective merits of faith and works, concluding that Buddha is not to be learned from books, but must be sought by every man in his own heart. The Kingdom of Heaven, as another than Bodhidarma teaches, is within you.

From 526 to 730 the patriarchate of the northern Buddhist Church, the Buddhism of the "Greater Conveyance"—or Mahayana, as it is called, to distinguish it from the purer more primitive, and more speculative Buddhism of Southern Asia—resided in China, till the last of the six Chinese patriarchs died, leaving the begging bowl of Bodhidarma to be burnt with his ashes, and ending what we may regard as the times of the Chinese saints.

China never became Buddhist in the sense of rejecting other creeds in favour of an exclusive acceptance of Buddhism.

China and
Buddhism.

The Church sometimes had persecutions to endure, and was at other times in favour with the powers of this world, but it never rose to the sort of political dominance that fell to the lot of Christianity. It combined with existing systems, even with Confucianism, to which its ideals appear so wholly opposite. To the stricter Confucian formalist the Buddhist life has always seemed an evasion and denial of those social duties, that filial service of the living and the dead, which is his notion of morality. To him the nature of man is radically good; to the Buddhist the whole world of human activity is a scene of evil from which he seeks salvation in flight. What could Buddhism have to say to the famous dictum of Mencius, that of all forms of impiety the most impious is to die without leaving descendants? Indeed all that is distinctive of Buddhism was repugnant to the Confucian mind. The tonsure of the priests was a defacement of the body inherited from our ancestors; for ages the commonest form of

persecution was to compel monks and nuns to return to the world and let their hair grow ; vegetarianism involved not only a flagrant defiance of national custom but impugned the animal sacrifices prescribed in Confucian books ; celibacy was a denial of filial gratitude and social duty ; the chanting and intoning of Sanscrit sutras was a detestable offence to people so proud of their native language and literature as the Chinese. Yet Buddhism triumphed over all these obstacles and became, to a degree which Confucianism never attained, the common religious atmosphere of the masses of the Chinese people.

With Taoism the Buddhist Church combined in all manner of ways, each borrowing or imitating countless features from the other, so that their border-line has become very hard to define. But Buddhism never dreamed of supplanting or overthrowing local creeds or observances ; at the most it sometimes softened and humanized them, as for example when we find it stated that the Buddhist leanings of Liang Wu-Ti fostered the substitution of paper images for use at funerals where animals had been sacrificed of

old. Many were the observances which it took as its own, such as the practice of sacrificing in autumn or late summer to the souls of those whose bodies are lost or unburied, floating little paper boats containing oil and a lighted wick along the rivers to light the wandering ghosts upon their way.

While imposing strict vegetarianism on its priesthood and commending abstinence from flesh as a merit in all, the Buddhist missionaries never succeeded in making, perhaps never attempted to make, the Chinese lay population copy the devotees of a religious life in regarding vegetarianism as an obligation. Even in Burma and Siam, perhaps in Ceylon, a Buddhism far stricter than that of China—a Buddhism that has undertaken, as Chinese Buddhism has never done, the function of the education of the young—is found consistent with plentiful indulgence in fish diet; in South China poultry, eggs, and pork, besides fish of all sorts, are partaken of freely and universally; North China is a country where the use of flesh food is only limited by the poverty of the people, though it is so far Buddhist in sentiment that a few weeks

Vegetarianism.

of drought or the imminence of some danger suffice to cause the authorities to proclaim a fast during which the slaughtering of pigs and cattle is forbidden ; Mongolia, of course, is a country without agriculture, whose scattered tribes depend wholly on their flocks. Yet it is more Buddhist than any of the regular provinces of China. Though there is a distinct aversion among all except Mahometans against eating the ploughing ox, the servant of man, vegetarianism is, in fact, in Eastern Asia, apart from priesthoods and small sects or fraternities, a matter of climate much more than of religion, and flesh-eating steadily increases as we proceed from the fruitful luxuriance of the Tropics to the arid steppes and pasture-lands of the North.

The Buddhist religion had already become a complicated system of ritual and idol worship before it reached China. The age of the great doctrinal councils, of Asoka and the Indian lawgivers and creed-makers, was long since past ; indeed in its native Indian home Buddhism was sinking under a revival of the more ancient Hinduist or Brahmanist faiths which it had at first sought to reform. It was already a mixture of many things,

and in China it had little difficulty in mingling into its structure many more. Yet in all its endless variations it remained fairly faithful to its underlying conception of an ascetic withdrawal from the world, of a contemplative life devoted to the worship of Buddha and his saints.

Above all the Buddhas, past, present, and to come; above the eighteen Lohans (Arhats) and the countless P'usas (Bodhi-sattvas), one figure rises in China to a pre-eminence of worship—that of Kuanyin P'usa, the Goddess of Mercy. Her image is in every shrine, but, unlike other images which sit, like emperors, facing the genial south, or like attendants on the great, flank the eastern and western walls, she, and she alone, stands with her face turned northwards contemplating the distresses of the cold world. In one of her personations she is Matsu, the patroness of fishermen and mariners; in another she is T'ien Hou, the Queen of Heaven; in another, Kuanyin of the Thousand Arms, her deeds of charity extend to all the world; in countless images as Fo-Mu, the Buddha Mother, she carries a child in her arms; as Pai-i Ta-shih, the Great

Worship of
Kuanyin
P'usa.

White-robed Lady, otherwise called Tzū-sun Niang-niang, the Mother of Offspring, she fulfils the hopes of expectant mothers and presides over the cradle of infancy ; in her own name, as I saw the legend acted in a play at Shanghai, she was the daughter of a king, but, pitying the sorrows of the toiling world, voluntarily renounced her rank, endured every extremity of pain and deprivation, even to visiting the dark prisons of Hell, and then returned to convert and console mankind.

Just as in the Christian Church the adoration of the Virgin Mother of Christ—the Madonna, the Theotokos, the Bogoroditsa—came to overshadow all other forms of piety, so in China did the figure of Kuanyin come to occupy the place of honour among all popular objects of worship. Nor did she remain wholly Buddhist, for her image is found in many Taoist temples ; as T'ien Hou, she is the counterpart of the distinctly Taoist divinity Yü Huang, the Sovereign of the Sky. Nor is her sex exclusively feminine, for the learned say that she was originally a male divinity whose gender was ignorantly confounded by the superstition of the vulgar, while others identify her with Avalokiteshvara,

a name of Samana, the "looking-down god" who dwells on Adam's Peak in Ceylon, and Sumana again with some Socotran or East African object of worship.

But surely we need not look so far. Whether we turn to Connemara or to Russia or to China—anywhere from Cadiz to Kamchatka, shall we not find that "Ch'u ch'u yu Fo-yeh; Chia chia yu Kuanyin" ("Every place has its Buddha; every home has its Kuanyin").

China owes to the Indian faith the enrichment of its language by a whole vocabulary of religious terms; in art, it is but yesterday that we all supposed that Chinese art, with its feeling for the wilder aspects of nature so much earlier developed than among ourselves, was wholly a product of Buddhism, and, if this opinion needs qualifying in detail, the fact that art in China is largely of Buddhist inspiration remains unshaken. Many other things too came with Buddhism into China, surely not least a gentler and humaner moral code. Little as the pride of Chinese scholars is inclined to admit it, an immense change came over the land through its permeation by doctrines that did for China almost what

Christianity, in the same ages, was doing for the West.

Buddhism comes to man as a consolation, bringing rest from anxious labour and care. It takes him out of himself ; out of the petty grinding worry of material things ; it purifies, uplifts, softens, and refreshes. Yet the world of duty is still with us, after all. Rest is not an end in itself but a means only ; its purpose is to recuperate and fit us with strength to fight to-morrow's battles. Though we are weary and heavy laden to-day, we cannot safely shirk our due share of burden. Whatever monastic piety may have urged either in the East or in the West, strength for further effort, for further thought, for wider usefulness is our greater and more lasting need. Man needs seasons of rest for his soul as for his body, yet, let him once make that need an excuse for mental sloth, or justify omission to explore all paths and hold fast what is good, then the call of monasticism is no voice of true religion, but a wile that tempts to yield up his manhood, forgetting that they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, that they shall mount upon wings like eagles, shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint.

V

THE
MINGLING
AND DECAY
OF FAITH



CHAPTER V

THE MINGLING AND DECAY OF FAITH

PRAYER and fasting, conviction of sin, conversion, renunciation of the world, salvation of the soul, an afterworld of reward and punishment; temples and images, pilgrimages and penances, tonsure and beads, candles and incense, gorgeous vestments, shrines and relics, the celibacy of the priesthood; monasteries and nunneries, asceticism, hermits, monks and nuns; the singing of liturgical services very suggestive of the service of the Mass, the invocation of saints, the worship of a Mother and Child: can we not see that this is in essence the same kind of religion, that if religion be a thing of the spirit and not of the name invoked only, it is the same religion as prevailed universally in the same stage of society, as still largely prevails among ourselves? Its outward forms suggest the forms of Christian

Resemblances
between
Buddhism
and
Christianity.

worship; its inward, spiritual experiences are among those with which Christians of all ages have been familiar. To the early missionaries of the Roman Church the resemblances seemed to be the work of the very Spirit of Evil—a monstrous mockery, mimicking every detail of the Christian faith and ritual. We need not follow them in any such theory. Human nature is human nature everywhere, and meets the same needs by the same devices; it is out of the heart of man that both Buddhism and Catholicism arose.

And it may well be that there is a closer, even an organic connection also. For, during

China under
the T'ang
Dynasty; open
to Christian,
Mahometan,
and other
influences.

the ages of the Patriarchate, of the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 624 to 907), wherein Chinese Buddhism mostly developed its cosmogonies and its worship, China was in fairly frequent and intimate contact with many influences from Western Asia. The regions of Turkestan and Kashgaria were under Chinese rule, and, as is shown in Professor Stein's work "The Sand-buried Cities of Khotan," these countries, now a desert wilderness, were, down to about the year 790, and had been for four or five

centuries, the seat of a numerous, mainly Buddhist, population, whose art shows a curious mingling of Indian, Chinese, and Greek, or Græco-Bactrian forms. Through that region Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, like Fa Hsien about A.D. 400 and Hsüan Ts'ang about A.D. 600, passed on their journeyings to India, just as Indian monks had passed to China in older and darker times.

Along the same road came other monks and teachers: Persians who brought the doctrines of Zoroaster; Nestorian Christians like the Syrian Bishop, Alopun, whose tenets and history from their first arrival in 635 to near the end of the eighth century are recorded on the famous inscribed stone monument, erected in 780 and still extant at Hsian. These founded communities of whose history we know all too little, though some were still in existence when Marco Polo visited China five hundred years later. Jews also came, whose synagogue was established at K'aifêng in Honan, and of whom a tiny remnant still remains unabsorbed in the same site to-day. All these had their influence on China; most of them became merged in the Buddhist priesthood, but they did not

leave it, or its doctrines and practices, unaltered.

After these came the Mahometans, to whom the Chinese world, with its infinite variety of local associations, must have seemed less congenial. In Turkestan, indeed, where, as in Arabia, the vastness of the mountains and deserts that surround the Roof of the World forms a fitting setting to draw the thoughts of men to contemplate the unity and unapproachable majesty of the all-ruling Allah, Mahometanism prevailed over older faiths, and Buddhism there perished utterly. But in China itself its reception was colder. The Mahometans no doubt penetrated far and wide, partly of their own will, partly by the planting of colonies of Turkish prisoners of war in many parts of the Empire, partly again through the operations of Arab sailors and traders who came by sea to various ports on the Chinese coast, so that at the present day there are Mahometan communities in most Chinese cities, and portions of the country where they constitute a considerable percentage of the people—perhaps in all some twenty millions. They did their part in modifying the general body of Chinese

belief, though never amalgamating entirely with their "Kaffir" neighbours, but living a life apart, monopolizing certain trades and occupations somewhat as the Jews do in many parts of Europe.

In estimating the influence of Mahometanism upon China we have to take into account the fact that, both in the T'ang age and later, it was the rise of warlike Mussalman States in Central Asia that brought intercourse between China and both the Indian and the Western worlds to a close. For, when all is said, China and Mahometanism have never been on good terms with one another—they have too little in common. With India, with the old pagan Europe of the classical past, or with the Europe of the Middle Ages, the Chinese mind has sympathy and many points of contact; but it has found Mahometanism an indigestible thing, and this antipathy must be reckoned with if we would understand the exceeding bitterness of the wars of rebellion and repression of which the Mahometan provinces of the Chinese Empire have so frequently been the scene.

We usually think of the T'ang period as the golden age of Chinese poetry; latterly we

have come to realize that it was also the age of the best Chinese painting and sculpture.

The age of saints succeeded by the age of parasites.

But it was also an age of faith, an age when men busied their minds with all kinds of doctrines about the unseen world, with creeds and rituals, with temples and with priests. Yet somehow with this age of faith—of many faiths—the older, simpler age of saintly zeal passes away.

We have, for one thing, come to a period of commerce and large towns. In the simple, rural surroundings to which it is congenial, Buddhism may remain pure and childlike, a beautiful, attractive, idealized thing. But it is a system incapable of transplantation into mature, elaborate, active civilization. There it can only turn into idolatry, idle repetition, mockery, spiritual petrification, decay, corruption, death of the soul. Nor is this true only of Buddhism; in its proper time and place the world of fancy and imagination that I have tried to picture in the chapter on Taoism is a natural and beneficent thing. As fairy tales are the appropriate mental food for the years of childhood, so does the shifting imagery of Taoist wonder tales form the

natural atmosphere of communities in the infancy of their growth, before positive knowledge has grown to be a sufficient guide for man's expanding reason. If I believe that a little, friendly T'u-ti spirit watches over my fields, and makes my grain sprout and ripen according as I burn incense-sticks before his image, and that my neighbour across the brook is helped or hindered by another little T'u-ti spirit, we may call this a very inadequate conception of the ways of God and Nature, but in its time and place it is the only possible one, and an inevitable step in the upward growth of the mind. But such a faith belongs to the childhood of society; the fairy world to which such conceptions are appropriate passes as men come to riper development; the form of it cannot be preserved without intellectual and moral degradation.

Yet men cling everywhere to the passing forms of their religion. Instead of seeking new interpretations more in harmony with their new knowledge and new experience, they simply enshrine the old in gorgeous trappings. We come to a period when religion is no longer simple and pure, an age of endless speculation

and of works of piety. Temples and pagodas and religious foundations of all sorts arise on every side. Even the old wonder tales put on an artificial, literary garb. Before long we shall come to the time when that amazing compendium, or epic as we may call it, of Chinese marvel lore, the "Hsi Yu Chi"—the "Wanderings in the West"—could be written and taken for a genuine account of travel in distant countries. Nor did the elaborating spirit of the age touch popular mythology only; it turned history itself into a world of literary romance, working up the annals of the "Three Kingdom" period, A.D. 190 to 260, into a kind of Arthurian Cycle, and covering even the memory of Confucius with weird miracle legends such as we find enshrined in the sixth-century picture-book called "The Footsteps of the Sage." Such a period not only elaborates existing superstitions into works of art, it touches nothing without dressing it up in supernatural colours.

Services become splendid and elaborate; but the ministers of religion tend to become parasites. In the ninth century we find no less than five Chinese emperors, one after another, dying poisoned by indulgence in magic elixirs,

administered by Taoist soothsayers on whom they had pinned their faith. A century later we have an instance of an emperor—a sovereign of one of the short, ephemeral dynasties that battled for a precarious sway in part of the dominions that had lately borne allegiance to the great House of T'ang—proclaiming the mountain T'aishan the patron of his throne. Mount T'aishan being conceived to be a being capable of having children, to whom popular superstition gave names, the eldest son of T'aishan was gravely declared to be Commander-in-chief of the Imperial Army. Then, if T'aishan had sons, could not these sons marry and have children in their turn? So it was announced that the son of T'aishan had espoused a certain goddess, and that the offspring of their union was a daughter—the goddess P'i-hsia Yüan-chün. And before another hundred years had elapsed we find, early in the eleventh century, the worship of T'aishan patronized and popularized by yet another emperor (the same Sung Chên-Tsung whose endowments enriched the Taoist Papacy in Kiangsi), the ancient temples there enormously enlarged and magnificently restored, for a "Heavenly Decree" written on yellow

silk had floated down from the sky, and all the Court followed their sovereign on a pilgrimage to do honour to the wonder. All this in the year 1008—the very time when, as we shall see in the next chapter, the intelligence of China was turning to quite other ideas.

Thus P'i-hsia Yüan-chün became the goddess in whose honour the principal temple on the sacred summit of T'aishan was dedicated. And so it remains to this day—to such a degree that in that particular part of Shantung the cult of P'i-hsia Yüan-chün, the T'ien Nai-nai, or “Nurse of Heaven,” as she is called, has almost displaced the worship of Kuanyin herself. Thither, every year, about February, thousands and tens of thousands of pilgrims make their way, through the long winter nights, mostly on foot, some devoutly on their knees, a few comfortably in sedan chairs hired from an exclusive guild of local chair-bearers, up the steep windings of that mountain road, to this loftiest of Chinese shrines that looks down from a height of 5,000 feet upon the plains of Lu. There, as the beams of the rising sun light up the neighbouring temples of Yü Huang, Emperor of the Skies, and of Confucius (for Confucius is represented at T'aishan,

not, as usually, by a simple inscribed tablet, but visibly in a gaudily decked image, behind an altar), and the stern, square-faced monolith erected on the mountain-top by the terrible Ts'in Shih Huang-ti, the pilgrims flock to the sanctuary of the Heavenly Nurse and fling their votive offerings through the bars of the grating which shields her from profane contact.

Evidently, once begun, the process of god-making might expand indefinitely, and with it the wealth and consideration enjoyed

Corruption
of religion.

by their priests and priestesses. But not their piety, for religion was becoming a trade. Pushed to its extremes, Confucianism may become a soul-crushing domestic and social tyranny; Taoism a senseless conglomeration of conjuring tricks and drivelling superstition; Buddhism a dead weight of monastic grovelling utterly fatal to the continued existence of society in any shape, sacrificing all human progress to the support of a crowd of idle, parasitical, mendicant monks and nuns. And, in such a state of affairs, does not our knowledge of human nature tell us what those monks and nuns will become? The tender piety of the older days of saint-hood and sincerity has all evaporated; we are

in a mephitic atmosphere of form and sensuous appeal where the old religion of the heart, in its simple purity, cannot breathe; we are preparing for that stage in which a Provincial Governor could report to the Throne that his province was, indeed, full of nunneries, but that the word "nunnery" had come to be used in popular talk as a synonym for a house of ill-fame, whose inmates were recruited by systematic and wholesale kidnapping.

Lazy, sensual, vicious, cruel, ignorant, greedy, cunning, murderous, harbourers of robbers and prostitutes, deluders of the ignorant, jugglers, grinders of the faces of the poor, beasts of darkness, hypocrites, and parasites. . . . But we all know that story of the corruption of high ideals; it is not peculiar to Chinese Buddhism—

'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage
And pious actions we do sugar o'er
The devil himself. . . .

It came in China just as it has sometimes come in Europe, and its phenomena were just the same.

You have, I dare say, considered the derivation of the word "hocus pocus," how the

holiest words of the Christian Eucharistic service, "hoc est corpus"—this is the very body of God made flesh—were perverted into "hoc est porcus," and used as a term of opprobrium indicating all vileness and deceit. Such is the depth of the hatred and contempt which men pour out upon that which once they held to be holy, when they find it used for their enslavement and betrayal.

Buddhism and Taoism had both turned into hocus pocus. They were, as other expressions of religion nearer to us have been, rightly and deservedly exposed to the indignant disgust of all men with eyes to see the works of their devotees, with hearts to feel for the wrongs of their victims, with minds to reason about the extravagances of their teaching. It is because one good custom, petrified into a form and a fetter, putrified into the rotting relic of its former self, might corrupt the world, that God, in each succeeding age, must fulfil Himself in many ways.



VI

THE
CONFUCIAN
RENAISSANCE



CHAPTER VI

THE CONFUCIAN RENAISSANCE

THUS the ground was prepared for the next stage of our story, the revulsion of the conscience and intelligence of the Chinese people towards a rationalistic interpretation of nature and of duty which begins to be apparent in the tenth century and bears its richest fruit in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries.

Rationalistic movement of the tenth and following centuries.

In A.D. 907 the great T'ang Dynasty had gone—very much as the Han had gone seven hundred years before — overborne by the usurpations of dowagers, harem women and their favourites, eunuchs and Turkish adventurers ; its credit destroyed by the charlatans and impostors who had so long abused the confidence of the weak but generally well-meaning successors, who unworthily filled the throne of the great T'ai-Tsung ; its power in

the provinces shattered both by the success of local governors in asserting claims to hereditary and all but independent rule, and by devastating civil wars in which the Imperial cause, if defended at all, owed such transient support as it obtained to the prowess of Tartar and Turkish champions; and there came an age of confusions and divisions, a shifting panorama of rivalries and local and personal ambitions that fills the sixty years called in histories of China the time of the Five Short Dynasties and the Twelve Independent States.

In general it was a time of weakness and of violence, but we can dimly trace the beginnings of a worthier state of things. Some of the local rulers—the kings of Wu-Yüeh, for instance, who made Hangchow a great and splendid city, and constructed the famous sea-wall to restrain the tides of the Ch'ient'ang Estuary — were promoters of civilization and orderly progress. Printing, too, had been invented, or, to be accurate, applied to the production of books, about 950; and with printing came a vast multiplication of books so soon as the Sung Dynasty (960 to 1127 in all China, and to 1279 in the South)

had restored some degree of unity and order to the land. Among the books of which editions appeared were the ancient rituals of classical or pre-classical times, now digested into orderly codes of customary law, the direct parents of the modern institutional works by which Chinese statesmanship and jurisprudence is guided to this day. Among them too were the books of the Confucian Canon, the Book of Odes, the History Classic, the Spring and Autumn Chronicle, the Lun Yü or Sayings of the Sage, the Great Learning, the Doctrine of the Middle Wisdom, the Book of Mencius.

In the contemplation of these things China turned away from the spinning of elaborate mythologies, from the ravings of delusive promisers of miracles, from the mumblings of monks—from all those ideals, whether of sainthood reached by ascetic devotion and meditation, or of attaining magic powers beyond the human, with which the nation had so long been unprofitably busied; ideals which, however widely they might differ from one another, agreed in belittling and neglecting the humdrum cares and duties of social relationships and ordinary daily life. And,

as many another nation has done in like case, China thought by restoring the uncontaminated beliefs and practices of her own past to provide herself with a more reasonable and more satisfying creed.

From the tenth to the thirteenth century, mainly under the dynasty of the Sung emperors, China passed through the phase of the Confucian Renaissance. To those times the return to the teachings of the Sages was not only a renewal of moral enthusiasm—it was a cleansing and cooling draught much needed to clear away the intoxicating vapours of alchemy and mystical superstition, of mummery and imposture. It was altogether a manlier thing. China had passed out of her childhood; and in politics, in social organization, in literature, in art, and in religion seemed determined to put away childish things.

The old literature, so pure and stately, so confidently manly, so free from all juggling with supernatural and unknowable things, was studied and commented upon anew, erected into a system by which all life was henceforth to be guided, at least among the educated, ruling

The Sung
Dynasty
revival of
Confucian
studies.

section of Chinese society. Yet the new, mature Confucianism that emerged—that, for instance, which we find in the writings of Chu Hsi (1140-1200), the greatest of the Sung schoolmen, whose commentaries later ages have learnt by heart as almost of equal authority with the classic texts themselves—is not altogether the old. Just as Confucius himself had dreamed that he was merely a transmitter, so they, to whom Confucius and Mencius were patriarchs of a remote and hoary antiquity, no doubt regarded themselves only as restorers and explainers of an older and purer teaching. But in fact they altered it. Not consciously or intentionally, but inevitably. They insisted on seeing system where there had been no system. They compared and collated texts, they made the interpretations of those texts agree with one another and with their own preconceived notions and theories of what ought to have been. Their minds were filled with a picture, a highly idealized picture, of the past. They transferred a mass of matter that had been inherited from a rude and primitive age to an advanced and far more mature society. In a word, their sense of historical perspective was pretty much

that which some modern systematic theologians among ourselves seem to possess when they approach the critical problems presented by the Bible.

An immense literary output marks the activity of this time of revival of learning.

Speculative
philosophy
of the Sung
scholars.

Turning away, as they did, from all anthropomorphic conceptions, in their disgust at the idolatrous extravagances around them, the scholars of the Sung Renaissance had a rather serious task to explain—or, shall we say, to explain away?—the theology, polytheist or other, which they found embedded in the old classics. The way they solved the problem first appears clearly in the works of Chou-tzū about the middle of the eleventh century. Beyond all human apprehension there is a something which it would be impious to define, to which he gives the name of T'ai Chi—the “Extreme Ultimate.” We cannot call the T'ai Chi a personal Being, for personality implies limitation, specialization of parts, organs, senses, and lands us in making a God in man's image, as the Buddhists did. But it is a Principle. We cannot grasp its totality, but we can be conscious in some measure of its various manifestations. All

nature is pervaded by the interaction of its two primary developments, to which Chinese philosophers, borrowing, perhaps, a terminology that smacks of Taoism—or did the idea come from Persia?—gave the names of Yang and Yin. Yang is the positive pole—the active principle, the principle of light and heat, the life-giving, impregnating male principle. Yin is the negative pole—the passive, receptive principle, the principle of cold and darkness, that upon which Yang acts, which it impregnates, the female principle. They are symbolically represented by the diagram



It will be observed that Yang and Yin are equal and opposite; also that there is a centre, a soul of light in the darkness, a spot of darkness in the light. By the interaction of these equal and opposite emanations of the T'ai Chi phenomena of all kinds come into existence. T'ien—Heaven—is a Yang manifestation, of which the Yin correlative is Ti, the Earth. Is not T'ai Yang—the "Supreme Yang"—the colloquial Chinese word for the Sun? Jên—Man—makes up a trilogy of Powers with T'ien and Ti, and is both Yang and Yin in his nature. Shang Ti—the Upper God, or Upper Gods—of the older theology of the ancient

classics, is a synonym of T'ien expressed, metaphorically, in terms of personality. But it did not escape the observation of the commentators that, while the oldest records of the past, the documents collected in the Shu Ching, or History Classic, for example, refer freely and constantly to Shang Ti as the object of human prayer and as directing, helping, or punishing his creatures, Confucius distinctly prefers the less personal expression T'ien. Developing this hint, mature Confucian thought avoided and disliked the attribution of personality to the Ultimate, holding such attribution to be a mere compromise with the imperfections of human means of expression. All moral qualities are manifestations of the same essential principle: Shên, its manifestation in superhuman, spiritual existences; Hsing—the “passion nature” of Mencius’ teaching—its manifestation in human or animal vitality; Hsiao, in filial obedience, extended, of course, to the full Confucian significance and scope of the word; Li, in propriety, courtesy, ceremony, orderly conduct, also extended in scope far beyond Western ways of thought; Jên, charity, benevolence, or humanity; I, unselfishness or public spirit; Ch'ih, modesty; Hsin, truthful-

ness; Chung, loyalty, and so forth. If we speak of Confucius and the Sages of old as Shêng, holy, we imply that there was manifested in them an innate apprehension of the ways of the ultimate reality which enabled them, without effort, to attain to moral perfection—a notion strangely at variance with Confucius' own account of his gradual growth in self-control and confidence. And so on to Hsien, acquired moral worthiness, Nêng, ability, and through the whole list.

Material nature, as well as moral principles, is developed along the same order of ideas. The ultimate quintessence of physical matter is Ch'i, breath, which is a result of the interaction of Yang and Yin, and consequently a vehicle for the manifestations of the T'ai Chi. From this come the five elemental substances—fire, water, earth, wood, and metal.

It is evident how, working on this line, a scheme of metaphysical speculation might be elaborated—especially how much of the crude, vague mythology of ancient times might be rationalized, while the language of antiquity was preserved; and into this speculation the scholars of the Sung plunged headlong, with as

much zest as ever did our mediæval schoolmen into their somewhat similar contests of wit. It was not, of course, wholly original ; terms, root-ideas, suggestions of it may be traced in far earlier ages. Neither was it wholly independent of the earlier traditionary notions ; men do not abandon all at once the mental atmosphere in which they have been brought up. But whatever indications the Confucian schoolmen found in the legends and literature of the past they rationalized and systematized, priding themselves on the guiding principle that every word which they found in the classics must be interpreted as having the same, or at least a consistent, meaning, wherever it might be found. For to them, of course, the Sages were the expounders of one single, coherent teaching, which it was their duty as commentators to recover and to explain.

Such was the speculative side of the revived learning. But it had a practical side perhaps even more important. As the scholars of the Sung age were also its statesmen and legislators, they had a magnificent opportunity to convert their theories into practice. The scholar class had at length won all along the

Mature
Confucianist
conception of
society ; how
far realized.

line, and before it the last remnants of the old feudal aristocracy fell and passed—in all the fully incorporated parts of China—almost to oblivion, while the monks and the fortune-tellers, banished from high places and social influence, sank into humiliation and obscurity among the ignorant masses of the poor. Society and government underwent a profound and lasting transformation. The system of competitive examinations, outlined long before, was developed into a sort of projection of the whole intellectual life of the nation, as well as the one legitimate channel of admission into the public service. The door was opened very wide, for the Confucianist ideal is frankly democratic. A few excepted castes—barbers, actors, etc.—were, indeed, excluded from the examinations, but otherwise they were open to all the men of the nation—in theory, if not in actual practice. It was a magnificent ideal—wonderful when we compare it with anything that could have prevailed in the Europe of those days, the time of the Crusades and the Norman Conquest of England. And, subject to the corruptions, imperfections, and qualifications that mar the symmetry of all human en-

deavours, it was wonderfully perfect in its carrying out. While Chinese public feeling has often been tolerant to the point of dangerous apathy with regard to all other abuses of administration, it has, with the rarest exceptions, been keenly alive to preserve the national system of competitive examinations from suspicion of venality. Back doors have, indeed, been found for entrance into the public service, but the occasions have, I imagine, been rare when this, the front door, has been forced by corrupting or intimidating the examiners.

True, the system led to the creation of a new aristocracy, for all those families whose sons habitually competed in, or repeatedly won success in the examinations became a favoured, influential class, entitled to numerous privileges and exemptions—the *Shên-shih*, or “Gentry”—among whom and in whose social and intellectual atmosphere official China has ever since lived. The officials being drawn from and surrounded by this *Shên-shih* class, who were everywhere the accepted, natural leaders of local society, government became sensitive to “*min ch’ing*”—public opinion—law took the place of arbitrary caprice, and, though in

theory autocratic rule remained unimpaired, much that we mean by liberty was in practice secured. Moreover, as this Shên-shih aristocracy was never, in theory, in the least exclusive and, even in actual working, and for all the weight that wealth, or family connection, or old-established local influence might carry, always open to the admission of new blood, it excited singularly little popular jealousy. On the contrary, the successes of its members at the examinations—the flagstaffs before their ancestral temples, the gilded and lacquered panels over their doors recording their academic distinctions—were held to reflect glory on all their clan, on all their neighbourhood, on all their province, and were recorded with loving pride by the local annalists who compiled the innumerable topographical histories and memoirs of Chinese districts and prefectures—Hsien Chih, Fu Chih, etc.—as the crowning honour and adornment of their native place. To be a candidate, a graduate, a scholar, became the fixed ambition of every active mind. It was the one great avenue to distinction, taking the place which all the liberal professions fill among ourselves.

As I have mentioned the Chinese public competitive examinations, it may be well to describe how these contests were in fact carried out. Though not a part of Chinese religion, they filled so enormously important a place in Chinese life for so many centuries that any sketch of mature Confucian society would be utterly inadequate and misleading without an understanding of their nature. Imagine a vast enclosure, several acres, perhaps many acres in extent, with a broad alley down the middle, spanned by ornamental gateways, entrance hall, and central hall, but all the rest of the space covered by line beyond line of little brick and plaster, tile-roofed cubicles, something like bathing-machines or sentry-boxes. In these little cells the candidates were shut up, separately, to the number of 10,000, perhaps 15,000 or even 20,000, each provided with writing materials, a table, and rough couch, and papers giving the subjects on which they were to write. The whole performance lasted eleven days. After being immured three days and two nights the candidates would be let out for one day. Then came another like period of incarceration and

The
Competitive
Examinations.

lastly a third. Though food was, of course, handed round by attendants charged with the care of the bodily needs of the students, it was a severe test of bodily endurance. During the time of examination no excuse of illness or other plea could release a candidate from his cell. The front door of the cell was sealed; even if, as sometimes happened, a candidate died, his body had to be removed through a hole in the back of the cell. In all the contests, whether in the District city, for the grade of T'ung-shêng—Licentiate—in the Prefecture, for that of Hsiu-ts'ai—Graduate—in the Provincial Capital for that of Chü-jên—Master—or in the Metropolis, for that of Chin-shih—Doctor—and for the still higher grades of Member of the famous Hanlin College, the subjects of examination were on the same lines—essay-writing and verse-making on texts taken out of the Confucian Canonical Books, with perhaps some questions on history and literary criticism. Adherence to the most rigidly classical style was insisted upon; the themes had to be developed according to regular orthodox model, and calligraphy was regarded as of such high value in assessing marks that one wrongly or slovenly written

word might cancel a whole paper. This system lasted with but slight and tentative alterations till 1905, when it was found too inconsistent with modern needs for reform and unceremoniously swept away. What practical thing is to take its place time alone can show; ideas and proposals are many enough, but chaotic in their variety and profusion. Sometimes it seems as though, in sweeping away this link with the great ages and memories of the past, modern reform had destroyed one of the chief bonds that hold the various sections of China together as a united people.

But in the very completeness of the victory of the Confucian literates lay concealed the seeds of weakness and decay. The scheme of education favoured by the latter scholasticism was, I think, even from the first, narrower, relatively to the needs and knowledge of the time, than that which the old classical age had known. In the Confucian books music, horsemanship, chariot-driving, and archery figure as an important part of the equipment of a gentleman. To the later scholar everything was sacrificed to the know-

Victory and ultimate weakness of orthodox Confucian society.

ledge of books, and, except that some history and kindred studies entered into the curriculum, the books were exclusively those dealing with canonical learning. Even history often seemed to close—to cease, at any rate, to be important or interesting, with the Han Dynasty and the recovery of the Confucian classics. All wisdom was held to be contained or implied in the works of the Sages; therefore to know them and the commentators, with some practice in essay-writing and verse—all, of course, in studiously classical and therefore artificial language—was all that could be expected of a gentlemanly scholar. It was, as will be seen, classicalism run mad—a phenomenon, after all, not wholly unknown to our schools and universities.

To the finished Confucian all else was merely the mechanical skill of shopkeepers and artisans—necessary but inferior orders of society with whom he disdained to be put in competition.

Classicalism
run mad.

Secure in his proud conviction of the superiority of his own national literary culture, he rarely stooped to examine the learning and civilization of other lands. And, indeed, where could he profitably look? Japan,

across the sea, could show him nothing but a weak and recently imported imitation of Chinese arts and literature, thinly veiling a society where a little Buddhist piety and a considerable element of chivalrous romance were the only foil to a chaotic turmoil of party strife and civil war, broken by the occasional emergence of a piratical berserker who diverted the martial energies of that turbulent people to the ransacking of Chinese or Korean coasts. India he had heard of as the home of Buddhism, but he was very far from inclined to respect Buddhism as a serious factor in his conception of civilized life. Rather he held it to be a delusion of weak and vulgar minds, to be graciously tolerated in the ignorant, but to which he himself had risen superior. Besides, like far-off Europe, India was effectually cut off from the Chinese world both by trackless glaciers and inhospitable deserts, and by the exclusive bigotry of the Mahometan conquerors of Central Asia. In every direction there was no people within his range of access or vision whose culture could for an instant be held to compete with his own. The idea of distant travel only entered his mind to

suggest the fooleries of silly monks, or the weird expeditions of ancient mystics who had launched off upon the boundless waters of the Pacific—like the jumbles of our nonsense rhymes—with crews of children to find the fairy isles of P'êng-lai, Fang-chang, and Ying-chou, where the Genii dwell beyond the rising of the sun. Botany and medicine he left to Taoist quacks and wizards—convinced, however, that all that ever could be really useful in these subjects was recorded in tomes of hoary wisdom dating back beyond the feudal age. Astronomy he abandoned to fortune-tellers, whose superstitions he was sceptic enough to laugh at, though he would have been horror-struck at the impropriety of letting his son or daughter contract a marriage with a person whose horoscope was astrologically inharmonious. Of mathematics he knew enough to reckon accounts, but he rarely went farther; to work the suan-p'an, or counting board, was a fitter occupation for a tradesman than for a scholar. The traditional scholar of Chinese novelists has, no doubt, a pretty knack of impromptu verse-making; can play the p'ip'a and the hsien-tzũ and dash off impressionist sketches on fans

and scrolls with ready brush. His ancestral home is adorned with two or three pieces of priceless ancient carved jade, ivory, and porcelain. But, in fact, art has become either a trade or a toy; so virile in all its branches in the T'ang era, it is already conventionalized under the Sung. In a world where, as we shall presently see, mechanical contrivances and inventions were already numerous, the scholar left all physical science on one side as no business of his, no concern of the governing brain which it was his function to supply to Chinese society. All these things were for mechanics and tradesmen to deal in, people whom he might employ, but who could not be his equals, and for whose attainments he had the same kind of feeling as some old-fashioned Oxford don of unreformed days might have entertained for the skill of a bricklayer. Morally, the scholar aspired to be a "Chün-tzŭ," and he remembered that Confucius had laid it down that the Chün-tzŭ is not a "utensil." In a word, Confucian scholarship was not slow to produce a plentiful crop of insufferable prigs. It was in many of its phases nothing but erudite ignorance, and, when the classical

pedantry of China came into contact with hardier, more energetic, and more varied civilizations, the weakness of orthodox Confucian society was inevitably laid bare.

Nevertheless, the Confucian Renaissance was a great and memorable stage in the moral and intellectual development

Importance
of the
Confucian
Renaissance.

of mankind. It represented a gigantic stride towards reason, towards the substitution of peaceful suasion for the rule of brute force in the world, towards freedom of thought, towards the awakening and enlightenment of men's minds. It democratized all Chinese society almost from top to bottom. It made men—scores of millions of men—familiar with the conception that government must be lawful and attentive to intelligent public opinion; that power is the rightful inheritance not of force, or of birth, of rank, or of wealth, but of talent and merit openly proved by public competition, of moral worth and of individual capacity in whatever rank of society they might be found.

The neighbourhood of Kiukiang, where I lived for four or five years, contains several interesting memorials of the Confucian

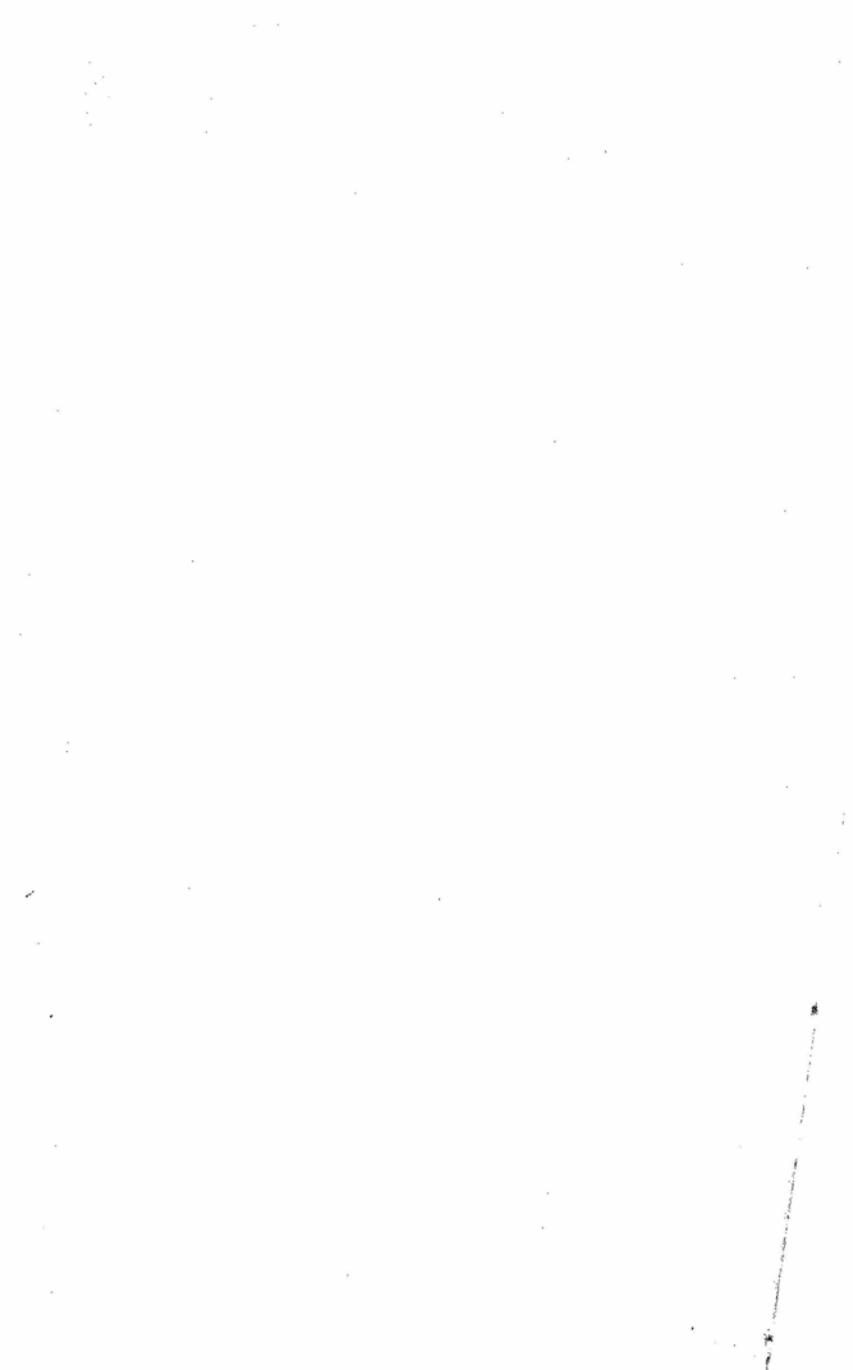
Renaissance. Chou-tzū, the thinker who first developed the speculative metaphysic of the T'ai Chi, lies buried a few miles outside the town. Farther away, among the mountains overlooking the Poyang Lake—right under the tremendous cliffs of Wulaofêng—in a land teeming with far older fairy legend, is Pailutung—the famous White Deer Grotto—to which the standard commentator and historian, Chu Hsi, the greatest of the scholastics, retired in his old age, and where grew up what is commonly spoken of as a Confucianist University. To-day it is ruinous and neglected, with perhaps thirty or forty inmates instead of the hundreds or thousands of ardent students by whom in old times it was thronged. Even the White Deer itself is not the original White Deer, sculptured to commemorate the gentle creature that led the philosopher's footsteps to this romantic retreat. After surviving all the perils and revolutions of six centuries—from the Mongol conquest to the T'ai-p'ing rebellion—the original stone image was broken up in the year 1886 by a party of vandal rustics, and has been replaced by a rude, modern abortion representing no species with which zoology

is acquainted, though it struck me as reminiscent of the inmates of the Noah's Arks of infancy.

With all its greatness the Renaissance was but a stage on the Way, not the Eternal Way; Chu-Hsi and Chou-tzŭ, Ssŭ-ma Kuang and Chêng-tzŭ, Ou-yang Hsiu and Ma Tuan-lin, like the Sages whom they loved and revered, are but names, and not the Eternal Name. They served their time, and their glory has passed away; and when we visit their tombs or their retreats, these are but trifling incidents on a landscape where the great shoulders of the Lushan tower 5,000 feet above the plain, as they did a million years before we or they were born.

VII

STAGNATION
AND FAILURE OF
CONFUCIAN
SOCIETY. THE
MONGOL CONQUEST—
CONTACT OF
EAST AND WEST



CHAPTER VII

STAGNATION AND FAILURE OF CONFUCIAN SOCIETY. THE MONGOL CONQUEST— CONTACT OF EAST AND WEST

WITH all its maturity of thought and culture, the Sung Dynasty, under which the Confucian Renaissance was mostly de-

Loss of
virility in
China under
the Sung.

veloped, never possessed the same military vigour as the older Han and T'ang Empires, but, almost from the first, suffered humiliating entanglements at the hands of the nomad peoples of Manchuria and Mongolia. In all the older periods of China the national ideal had included a considerable element of hardy, outdoor life; there are extant contemporary native accounts—some of them translated in Giles' "*Adversaria Sinica*"—of polo matches, in which even emperors had not disdained to risk their sacred persons; in the T'ang Dynasty football seems to have been almost

as much a national institution as the Saturday editions of our newspapers make it appear to-day among us. As to charioteering, the Chinese of the tenth or eleventh century had progressed so far as to build a carriage furnished with an automatic machine for registering the distance travelled—a rather clumsy form of taxi-cab, in fact! But in the exclusively literary and sedentary culture of the Confucian schools these activities were frowned upon as ungentlemanly.

And in the history of these times we may trace a confession of growing weakness in the curious series of socialistic and fiscal experiments whereby the reforming or innovating party among the Confucianists—Wang An-shih, for instance (in power at various dates from about 1070 to 1090)—sought to find a short cut out of all the economic woes and failures with which mankind are afflicted. Founding their proposals on certain indications in the classical books as to ancient forms of land tenure, taxation, and local administration—or, as their opponents, Ssu-ma Kuang, etc., protested, altering and forcing the sacred text to suit their own theories—the reformers in-

Socialistic
and fiscal
experiments.

duced the Government to establish a great system of advances to farmers, secured on the credit of future harvests, and to revolutionize the whole existing scheme of taxation.

These measures were designed to abolish poverty entirely, but in their result profited no one except the host of greedy, peculating officials created to carry them out. The former military system was, at the same time, abolished in favour of an unworkable scheme of conscription proportioned to population, that broke down at the first serious outbreak of war. Possibly the only really permanent and beneficial result of all this curiously modern activity was the extension to the estates of the great provincial landowners of the liberation of the former serf labourers, which had been begun on the Imperial domains as early as T'ang times, and, under the Sung, became general throughout the settled and populous parts of China. Neither serfdom nor domestic slavery was ever abolished; the latter is not uncommon to this day, though far less so than the minute regulation of its incidents in the existing law codes of China would lead one to suppose, and I have met the former both on the estates of a scion of a former Imperial

house and in remote country villages, where a poor and degraded serf clan, living mostly in caves, were owned in common by a more advanced landowning clan. But in general the industry of China passed to guilds of free traders and artisans, and the agricultural land, subject to certain taxes or other obligations, to the actual cultivating peasantry, being held in common by village communities for their own use and support or else let out by such communities to tenants at a rent. It would, I imagine, be commoner in China to find a tenant farmer holding of a community, i.e. of perhaps some hundreds of "landlords," each of whom gets a tiny share of that farmer's rent, than to find an individual landowner whose estate is parcelled out to any considerable number of tenants.

Along with these social changes we may note—and doubtless it proved a source of weakness—an excessive concentration of population in a few large cities, such as K'aifêng, the earlier, and Hangchow, the later capital of the Sung emperors. The chapters in Marco Polo in which he describes the Hangchow (Kinsai, he calls it) of the thirteenth century read like a romance, but

in the main they are but little exaggerated, while K'aifêng is said to have had fifteen million inhabitants; rhetoric, no doubt, yet evidence that it was an immense city. At any rate, the successive Sung capitals must have been far more populous, wealthy, and splendid than any other cities existing in the world. China as a whole was certainly far less thickly peopled then than it has since become, and one suspects that, if the capitals were anything like the size represented, the country districts must have been seriously drained of resources for their support.

Lastly, there was, all through the Sung period, the fatal policy of flooding the country with repeated issues of unconvertible paper currency, whose depreciation led to widespread financial ruin and general distress. Poverty and party strife paved the way for barbarian invasion and China fell. All

The Kin
conquest of
the north,
1127.

through the eleventh century the north had been exposed to repeated inroads of the Kitan (Cathayan) Tartars, whose sovereigns, known as the Liao Dynasty, imposed one humiliating treaty after another upon the Sung Empire and despoiled it of

many a border district. With the twelfth century another tribe, the Kin or Nüchên, emerging from the recesses of Manchuria, overwhelmed all the north (1127), and in the thirteenth century the whole Chinese world became subject to the invading hordes of the Mongols.

In those days lived one who is perhaps the greatest and most original of all the scholars

of the Confucian Renaissance, Ma Tuan-lin. He lived about 1250 to

1300, though his works were not collected and printed till a good many years after his death. He may be reckoned to belong to the Renaissance, yet in many ways he is not of it but above it—a calm, lonely thinker; historian, critic, political economist, jurist, whose thoughts sometimes read like anticipations of Bentham or John Stuart Mill, but being in a harsh, crabbed style of extreme erudition, the language is beyond the attainment as the matter is beyond the mental calibre not only of his own age but of those that have followed. He saw the fall of the regime under which the intellectual outburst of the Renaissance had been possible, and I remember reading with great interest, in a work by Vissering on

Chinese currency, a masterly analysis by Ma Tuan-lin of the history of paper money in China and the part it had played in undermining the Empire of the Sung.

The fall of the "learned" was as natural an event as the coming of the new Confucianism had been. Form had become more prized than matter; artificial elegance had taken the place of strength; originality and spontaneous thought were smothered by erudite and servile imitation of ancient models; for Ma Tuan-lin and such as he, if there were any, wrote less for the public of their own day than to their own solitary souls; and China found herself, in the day of trial, no match for her secular enemy, the nomads of the waste.

China is the tilled land, the home of a settled agricultural and commercial people,

with farms and villages and market towns, rich with cornfields, orchards,

ricefields, planted with sugar-cane, cotton, and mulberry, whose rivers and roads swarm with traffic and the busy competition of peaceful industry and trade. But all through their long history this people has been engaged, with varying fortune, in an unending struggle with the wandering, pas-

toral tribes beyond the borders of cultivation; now carrying their sphere of influence far and wide over Northern and Central Asia, anon suffering devastating inroads at the hands, alternately, of the herdsmen of the desert and the hunters of the forest—the Turks and Mongols of the steppes or the Nüchên and Manchus of the tree-clad ranges that lie beyond the Liao.

The ancient Han times had seen a long series of struggles with the Hsiung-nu confederacy result in the extension of Chinese power almost to the Caspian Sea. The nomads, so far as they were not conquered, had been driven back, ever farther to the west and north, beyond the range of Chinese knowledge, to break loose, some centuries later, on the astonished peoples of Europe as the Huns. Then came an era when Hsiung-nu invasions from the north-west and Hsien-pi invasions from the north-east had brought about a strong infusion of Tartar blood all over the north of China. Then, all through the T'ang epoch, many centuries of intercourse, warlike and diplomatic, with Turks, Turfan, Tibetans, Wei-hu, etc., while many another tribe and nation finds a place in the long list of bar-

barian peoples as the panorama of the ages unrolls. Not that they were really new nations. These peoples gather as the clouds gather, and burst as the clouds break in rain, but they have no enduring form or substance. From first to last they are combinations of the same wild, elemental, lawless, tent-dwelling wanderers, strong with the animal strength of a free open-air life, who follow their flocks and herds wherever the grass is sweet and the water sufficient, but never settle down in fixed habitations anywhere to learn habits of industry. Once let them be encamped among a settled, civilized people, and they sink, as the Manchu bannermen of our times have sunk, into a miserable caste of pauperized idlers against whom, in the hour of collapse, every man's hand is raised. All through the history of China we meet with the same old tale, such as the experiences of Egypt, Syria, and Persia have made familiar, of a never-ending conflict between the Desert and the Sown. The stage which we have now reached, that of the Mongol conquest and Dynasty, shows us the shepherd and hunter element, for a brief space, dominating over the peaceful dwellers in fenced cities and ploughed fields.

It was an inevitable thing, and, when the first energies of barbaric conquest had spent themselves, a benefit to the world.

Cosmopolitanism of the Mongol dominion.

For instead of the intensely national and exclusive culture of China, the

Mongols established a vast cosmopolitan dominion. They simultaneously overran Russia and Poland, Persia and China. They penetrated to Delhi, to Hangchow, to Buda-Pesth. They overthrew the Khalifate of Baghdad. They threatened India, Germany, and Japan. All distances were effaced, all nations mingled under their rule. Europe, on hearing of their conquests, fell into such a panic that one year—1238, I think it was—the alarm spread even to England and entirely put a stop to the North Sea herring fishery for that season. A special office of prayer was ordained in Christian churches for deliverance from the wrath of the Mongols.

But the alarm subsided. In the next generation the Mongols allied themselves with the kings of France and England; they sent embassies to the Pope and received missions from the Church of Rome, as well as from Buddhist dignitaries of Tibet. And what did the missionary friars find in the

depths of Tartary? That a wandering Englishman had, in 1246, been already for several years a captive or guest in the camp of the Mongol Khan; that their wants were ministered to by a woman from Lorraine; that the Khan had mechanical toys made for his entertainment by an artificer from Paris. For every such instance that we find recorded in the narratives of Rubruquis or John de Plan Carpin, we may be sure that hundreds of others existed whereof we have no memorial. Yet a few years more and we find the Mongols participating with Europe in the last Crusades, for Europe and the Mongols had a common enemy in the Mahometan Powers of the Near East.

Between the years 1270 and 1307 fourteen embassies from the Mongols to the various Courts of Europe are recorded, of which the last arrived in time to be received by Edward II of England at Northampton and to congratulate him on his accession. The West, for its part, contributed to the success of the Mongol arms in China, for both the Chinese historians and Marco Polo relate, though with curious differences of date and detail that render the accounts hard to recon-

cile, that Kublai's generals employed, and owed their success to, exceedingly powerful mangonels of improved pattern made for their use at the siege of Hsiangyang by Western engineers. This was one of the most important operations of the decisive phase of the war against the Sung, and, whether we believe the Chinese story that the mangonels were ordered from Persia in the year 1271 or Marco Polo's tale that they were made in 1274 by a German and a Nestorian on the suggestion of Marco's father, uncle, and himself, the facts are equally illustrative of the Mongols' readiness to welcome foreigners and adopt their ideas.

In world history this cosmopolitanism of the Mongol power is a greater fact than we commonly realize. For a moment only, as history counts time, it brought the East and the West together, but that moment sufficed to carry to Europe the seeds of the great transformation whereby our modern civilization is separated from the society of the Middle Ages. The use of printed books, the use of paper money and negotiable instruments of exchange, the use of glass lenses for extending and assisting the powers of the human eye,

the use of cotton as a material for weaving, the use of the mariner's compass in navigation, the use of coal as a fuel and of gunpowder as an explosive, of firearms and artillery as weapons of war—all these things were known to the Chinese of the Sung era; all, with many more—such trifles as playing-cards, for instance—were carried to the West in the wake of the Mongol conquests, and, fructuated and improved in the soil of Europe, adapted somewhat to Western needs, are they not precisely the material and mechanical scaffolding inside which the whole fabric of our modern Western life is built up?

That is Europe's debt to the Far East; the Mongols and the Turks, whom we are apt to look upon as the most destructive, the least creative of all the peoples who have played leading parts upon the stage of the world, are the peoples by whom that debt was transmitted.

I should like to dwell for a while upon this moment in human history, to try to portray the impression which the Chinese world of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries must have made on the imaginations of Western observers of that time.

The East in
medieval
eyes.

Strange it must have seemed to them, strange and distant and vast, yet, coming from the rustic, barbaric castles and monasteries of France or Flanders, or even from the little city republics of Italy, it cannot have struck them as a world inferior to their own. When once the superficial, external differences were surmounted, it must even have seemed curiously familiar. Its religion was surely much the same; its laws were no harsher, and were, very likely, better administered; peace and public order were at least as well provided for; if the junks of the Yangtze, or those that followed the monsoons to the Southern Archipelago, were less swift than the keels of the English Channel, they were certainly no more clumsy than the many-oared galleys which navigated the Italian and Levantine seas. The roads were not such as the great highways of Imperial Rome once had been, but they compared very well with the robber-infested tracks of Feudal Europe. Clothing was as rich and as varied, houses were certainly no worse built or furnished; food, quite possibly, was better and more skilfully prepared. With the possible exception of Constantinople, fast

verging to decay, Europe had no city that could compare for one moment in population, wealth, splendour, or commercial activity with the Hangchow of the Sung, no military camp on anything approaching the scale of the new Peking which was rising at the command of the Mongol conqueror, Kublai. In arts and inventions Europe had at least as much to learn as to impart; the one feature that occurs to me as undeniably superior was the splendid architecture of the West. China had massive works, and works of much beauty and taste of ornament, but nothing that combined strength and permanence with beauty of detail—nothing to match either the remains of Greek and Roman magnificence or the Gothic cathedrals with which Europe was, at that very time, becoming covered. But I know of no other feature in which Europe could claim any marked superiority.

If this were true of externals, much the same can be said of the things of the mind. There was not much to choose intellectually, or, if there was, it told in favour of the East. Education was more general than in any part of Europe, unless, possibly, the more progressive cities of Italy; and surely the

scholastics of Bologna, of Paris, or of Oxford, as these centres of learning were in the thirteenth century, could they have known, would have had little reason to despise the students who flocked round the feet of Chu Hsi in the pinewoods of Pailutung.

It is difficult to reconstruct the past in its true perspective; there is much that is for ever buried in oblivion. Yet, as I read my Marco Polo, while the China that he pictures agrees in many particulars with the country which we know to-day, the thought strikes me that where it differs is in being a country less inclined than the China of our days to cover under a mantle of exclusiveness and pride an inward sense of defeat—it is an unhumiliated China, with no cause to feel itself inferior to its Western visitor. Nor does the Western visitor feel that he is among a people of lower culture; he certainly calls them "idolaters," but in all the arts of war and of peace he seems to acknowledge them for at least his equals. He is, indeed, somewhat overwhelmed by the sense of the splendour and immensity of their world, so that in after-life his talk is so constantly of millions that he acquires the nickname of "del Millionaire."

In that age it was easier for men to perform long journeys than to describe what those journeys had taught them. There was only one Marco Polo, and it was only to the chance that made him a prisoner in Genoa that the world owes his description of the East. But there were many who had seen something of that world beyond the Tartar hordes; they were not great, they were not learned, they did not move among the culture of the time, but they scattered here and there, by unperceived channels of communication, idea after idea to germinate in a fresh soil and bring the stagnation of the Middle Ages to an end.

I have no wish to disparage Mediæval Europe. On the contrary, all must acknowledge its many elements of strength and beauty, its chivalry, its piety, its poetry, its artistic inspiration. But on the whole I do not think it was a world of greater or more varied culture than the China of the Confucian Renaissance and the Mongol era; I am quite confident that it was not a wiser, a wealthier, or a better-ordered world.



VIII

NATIONALIST REACTION; LAMAISM

CHAPTER VIII

NATIONALIST REACTION; LAMAISM

ABOUT the middle of the fourteenth century Chinese society was profoundly agitated by the expected coming of a Buddhist Messiah. Maitreya—Milo Fo—the fat and jolly Buddha of the Future, the images of whose laughing face and plump embonpoint irradiate so many homes and shrines in China, was, it was believed, about to visit the earth in human guise, and in the year 1368, largely under the impetus of the enthusiasm thereby aroused, the Mongol power fell before a revival of Chinese nationalism. The native Ming Dynasty, descendants of Chu Yüan-chang, himself in youth a Buddhist temple servant, took the place of the house of Genghis. China enjoyed many glories during the rule of her Ming sovereigns, but, just because their dominion was a nationalist revival and

Nationalist
revival of
fourteenth
century; the
Ming Dynasty.

a reversion to ancient ways, it is, from our point of view, an age of stagnation, isolation, and decay.

Outwardly the revolution of 1355 to 1368 has the appearance of a return to the conditions of the age of the Confucian Renaissance, but indications are not wanting that reaction went farther. The heroes who had surrounded the last Sung sovereigns in their hopeless resistance to the armies of Kublai, as well as the earlier champions of the struggle against the Kin Tartars, became objects of general veneration, and, as in the case of Yo Fei, the most famous of them all, have remained to this day the model patriots of Chinese popular legend. It was ordained that dress should revert to the fashions of T'ang times. Those Mongols who were not driven back into the wilderness were generally reduced to a condition of serfdom, and for ages their descendants formed, in many parts of China, a pariah caste, excluded from participation in the public examinations and in many ways denied the usual rights of citizenship. The extensive privileges secured by the collateral branches of the new ruling family created a sort of feudalism, which,

with the rapid development of eunuch influences in the Court, seriously impaired the unity and the administrative efficiency of the Imperial Government. In regard to national customs a change occurred that is not without interest. Ever since the popularization of Buddhism the old Chinese practice of burying the dead had found a serious rival in the Buddhist practice of cremation. During the Sung period the Confucianist scholars had constantly fulminated against the prevalence of this, in their eyes, impious and pernicious foreign innovation, but, it would seem, without any great result. All foreign visitors to China in that age bear witness to the fact that the Chinese were a people who commonly burnt their dead, nor is the native evidence on this subject less uniform. Under the Mongols, with their Tibetan affinities, the practice continued in favour. But with the establishment of the Ming rule, it disappears from the common usage, remaining as a special rite of the Buddhist priesthood alone. With the reversion to Confucianist ideas on the subject of burial in general, we are not altogether surprised to find instances, in Imperial burials at least, of reversion to

even more primitive practices, suttee and human sacrifices, not perhaps on the old barbaric scale of Han times, yet curiously inconsistent with the general level of civilization that the literary culture of the age would lead one to expect to find. Until the practice was forbidden in 1465 it would seem that every one of the Ming sovereigns was "followed in death" by his slaves and concubines much as an old king of Ts'in might have been two thousand years before.

While China was thus going back into her own past, the consolidation of the Turkish power in Western Asia, both through the rise of Tamerlane's Empire and through the later victories of his enemies, the Ottoman Turks, barred the land routes between China and the West, and brought the intercourse which had characterized the era of the Mongol rule abruptly to an end.

In China learning undoubtedly continued to flourish, but it was no longer creative.

The age of encyclopædias. It is the age of encyclopædias, not of original work. Its crowning achievement was the vast Yung-lo Encyclopædia, dating from about 1405-1410—the labour of thousands of scholars, collectors,

and copyists, enshrining the whole of traditional Confucian wisdom in its millions of pages and myriads of volumes—to be exact, 22,877 volumes, of which 60 are occupied with the table of contents. It was never printed. One manuscript copy was long preserved at Nanking, another in the Hanlin College at Peking, where most of the volumes were destroyed by Boxer vandalism in 1900. Those that were saved were collected by the defenders of the Legations and are now, I believe, scattered among the universities of Europe and America. In the eighteenth century an abstract, vast, yet more measurable in its dimensions, was printed and published, and this, known as the Ch'ien-lung Cyclopædia, forms the great storehouse of orthodox Chinese learning. Now and then copies come on the market. There are at least two in England, one being in the British Museum ; and I understand that the University of Cambridge has been negotiating for the purchase of another, the cost, of a first edition, in these revolutionary days, when there is a slump in the market for ancestral wisdom, being only £550, in place of the usual price of about £2,000. Modern reprints are, however, obtainable in China for about £30.

Yet, with all this massive erudition, it is plain that the native schools of thought had entered upon a phase of gradual decay. Law codes there were, also some curious treatises on what we are obliged to call natural science—but it is a science of men ready to believe any tale recorded in an ancient book, but who never pause to verify statements by observation, travel, or experiment. If we would seek for real activity of mind in the Ming age, we must turn away from the works of the “learned” altogether, and seek distraction among a crowd of vernacular novelists and writers of popular drama who, from the fourteenth century onward, began to amuse their countrymen by recording the national legends and fairy tales in a colloquial, or semi-colloquial, idiom far removed from the stately artificiality of classical pedantry.

Thus, although much work, some of it good work, was being done in China during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, the two native religious systems and the great imported religious system of the country had, to all appearance, run their course, and degenerated into

vain, mechanical, lifeless repetition of old formulas.

In its essentials Religion itself is one, in all countries and all times, for it is concerned with universal and eternal things. Religious systems are man's imperfect endeavours to express those universal and eternal things in terms of his local and momentary impressions, needs, and knowledge. Of their very nature they have their day and cease to be: they are temporary and perishable, for no man by searching can find out the Almighty to perfection.

When their first enthusiasm has waned the very forces of reverence, piety, and tender feeling which inspired their growth

Divorce of
religion from
daily life.

are apt to become their fetters and, in time, their sepulchre and their shroud. Imitation is so much easier than spontaneity: so much of pious association attaches to the memories of the past—it is so easy and so plausible to say that our duty is to hand down from age to age to the remotest future, whole, uncorrupted, and intact, the faith once for all committed to the saints of old, that men forget that those saints were, as we are, fallible men, who in their age and

place battled with the problems of their day even as we do with those of ours—that faith itself is not vision, but the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, or, as the Tao-Tê Ching puts it, the Way that man can go is not the Eternal Way, the name that man can name is not the Eternal Name. Thus men come to worship the very words of books and creeds; services and ceremonies, hallowed by the traditions of ages, come to be looked upon as in themselves sacred and religiously efficacious apart from the spirit which gave them birth, or the emotions they originally evoked and symbolized, and men adhere to the letter of rituals from which all life and reality are ebbing away. Institutions and doctrines appropriate to one stage of growth and knowledge survive into another age to whose expanding experience they are irrelevant, and with which they are out of harmony. Mind and soul no longer accord. Knowledge, indeed, grows from more to more, but reverence no longer accompanies its growth. Its interpreters scoff at religion: the interpreters of religion despise and try to proscribe sciences which they deem ungodly, and for

ever strive to confine men's minds in the swaddling clothes of an older organization. But the words of old are tongues that cease, the knowledge of old is a knowledge that passes away, whose expression may change. The only things that abide are faith, hope, and love; for their life depends on no human organization, rather the life of human organizations depends on them.

In the dim light of the sanctuary, surrounded by images and gilding, drugged with incense and solemn music, men still repeat and half believe the old formulas, but they cannot translate them into terms of their daily life. In the dry, cool light of the open street, among the bustle of actual conflict with workaday realities, their lesson slips from the mind as a forgotten dream, and there seems to be no other idealism wherewith the hard facts of life can be transfigured with any ray of higher aspiration. Adhesion to the letter slowly strangles the spirit: religion and common life become divorced from one another, and both suffer a descent to a lower plane.

In China all this happened. We have already seen how Buddhism and Taoism

could become a mere babbling and droning of parasitic monks, a mechanical juggling with the drivelling superstitions of impostors. Confucianism sank also. Learning became a means to pass examinations: subjects of study were rigorously stereotyped; examinations were no longer a help to wide reading and varied knowledge, but a mere step towards place and power. Ethics were a subject to be crammed from text-books: as Mencius would have expressed it, men professed to follow the "nobility of God" in order to attain the "nobility which is of man." Form had supplanted matter in all literary endeavour. It is only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then perhaps under the influence of the percolation of Western ways of thought, that Confucian scholars began tentatively to question the infallible authority of the great Sung Dynasty commentators, and to suggest that in some details the older editors of Han and T'ang times had perhaps possessed a truer appreciation of the Confucian age than Chu-hsi and the schoolmen of the Renaissance.

Fresh life was needed before any new

development could come into being. The first breath of originality appears in the fifteenth century with the emergence of a new form of Buddhism, the Lamaist religion, which, during the next two hundred years or so, came to prevail among the Tibetan and Mongolian hordes.

Lamaism in
Tibet and
Mongolia.

Buddhism had been introduced and vigorously patronized in Tibet as early as the seventh century A.D., under the first acknowledged ruler of the country, Srongtan Ganpo, who, in 641, had espoused a daughter of the great Chinese Emperor T'ang T'ai-Tsung. From about the eleventh century the temporal power of the kings had been largely overshadowed by that of the Buddhist hierarchy, especially the heads of the famous monastery of Sakya, practisers of a form of Buddhism which came to be known as the Red Church. In course of time the doctrines of the clergy came to be largely mixed with Hinduism, and even by departure from the rule of celibacy. At length their corruptions and pretensions provoked a revolt under the leadership of a reformer named Tsongkhapa (1417 to 1478), a native of Hsining in the

Chinese border province of Kansu, whose followers founded the "Yellow Church" or Lamaist form of Buddhism.

Under their influence the national character of the border peoples has been gradually and deeply transformed. Lamaism is much concerned with curious ritual practices, such as the mechanical making of prayers by the revolving of inscribed wheels and cylinders, or other toys, worked by the hand or the wind, but its chief tenet is that its various ecclesiastical dignitaries are successive incarnations of the different Buddhas and Saints—a wide extension, in fact, of the notion which we have already seen exemplified in the succession to the Taoist Papacy. The Dalai Lama of Lhasa is the incarnation of Kuan-yin; the Panshen Lama of Teshilumbo that of Manjusri, the deity who was incarnate in Tsongkhapa; the Hutuktu of Urga and many more perpetuate Maitreya or other Buddhas. Beneath these highest impersonations are numerous "Living Buddhas." In all countries where this faith has come to prevail, it has taken so firm a hold on popular sentiment that an enormous percentage of the people—a third to a half

perhaps of the males—devote themselves to a “religious” life as Lama-monks. Before this intense absorption in piety all other human activities have withered away. The very nations who supplied the devastating hordes of Attila or of Genghis have sunk into passive, priest-ridden serfs of their Church; harmless camel-drivers or shepherds or horse-breeders of the steppes, who are so literally artless that they need to call in a Chinese to do the work if ever they require the services of a tinker or a carpenter. They are the helpless prey of the Chinese money-lender, and have no amusement except attending pony races where the chief racing owners are the local equivalent of bishops and half the spectators are clergy.

With the growth of Lamaism the old danger of invasion from the side of the desert nomads passed silently away, and the Great Wall which the earlier Ming sovereigns had been at pains to restore—not needlessly, as the capture of a Chinese emperor in the Mongol War of 1450 sufficiently proves—became, as it is to-day, an antiquarian curiosity. But, if the desert was pacified, no sooner had the

Lamaism
prepares the
way for the
Manchu
Empire.

decay of the Ming Dynasty exposed China to the miseries of a generation of discord and devastating civil war than the ground was laid open for a new conquest by the nomads of the north-eastern forests. Accordingly, just about the time when Mongolia had followed the example of Tibet in becoming thoroughly permeated by the Lamaist faith, it, as well as China, fell before a new race of conquerors, the Manchus, who held sway until the recent Chinese Revolution of 1911-1912. The Lamaist movement paved the way for the Manchu conquests and rendered them possible, and it is observable how, all through the period of Manchu dominion—although Lamaism never made much impression upon the matter-of-fact settled populations of China proper—the Imperial Government sedulously cultivated and fostered it as a politically useful force in all those regions where it had taken root. There are two splendid Lamaseries in Peking, adorned with the masterpieces of Tibetan art, but the prudent will beware how they visit them unescorted, for, unless their inmates have changed greatly since I knew Peking, they are the abode of a gang of savage and greedy extortioners, whose manners

and repute illustrate the wholesome truth that, wherever men demand to be revered as incarnations of the divine, they are in imminent danger of sinking below the average level of the human.

In Mongolia, by all accounts, the natural gentleness and childlike simplicity of a primitive people have, on the whole, preserved the virtues of hospitality to strangers; it is only the Chinese that are feared and hated, with an intensity of passion that makes the strife which at times afflicts the border of the two races a sickening record of atrocities; the burning of Mongol encampments revenged by a raid on Chinese villages where, the adults being slain or driven out, the children are impaled wholesale upon the cottage doors. In Tibet till a very few years ago every foreigner lived the life of a hunted wolf, unable to show his face in the daylight lest the Lamas should seize him and torture him to death. In both countries civil life, under the rule of the Lamas, has been brought well-nigh to an end.

IX

**CHINA
AND THE
CHURCH OF
ROME**



CHAPTER IX

CHINA AND THE CHURCH OF ROME

SOME influence more far-reaching and inspiring than Lamaism was needed for the awakening of China, and it could

Maritime
intercourse
with Europe.

only come from abroad. The Far East, as we have observed, equipped

Europe with the tools for a grand transformation scene of European life, and by the end of the fifteenth century that grand transformation was already bearing fruit in a wide outburst of European energy. With the aid of the compass, in ships armed with powder and firearms, Western mariners pushed their way across the Ocean to America, round the Cape of Africa, along the southern shores of Asia, exploring, conquering, colonizing—and they were not long in appearing on the coast of China. Confounded at first with Japanese pirates, to whose depredations those coasts had long been a prey, and whose doings the

Europeans sometimes copied too faithfully, the Portuguese and Spaniards nevertheless brought with them the first heralds of a new religious and intellectual message. The Apostle of Japan, Saint Francis Xavier, did not indeed set foot on the Chinese mainland, though he died on an island on the Chinese coast. But in the next generation Jesuit missionaries—men whose learning was as wide as their zeal was enthusiastic—devoted themselves to the task of converting the Chinese to their Church.

The first great Jesuit Apostle of China, Matteo Ricci, landed at Macao in 1579, and after many years spent in various parts of the south and centre, after being imprisoned as a Japanese spy and other adventures, made his way to Peking in 1601, and died there in 1610. He had a very warm reception from the Chinese; many of the higher classes thoroughly appreciated his learning; his mathematical and other treatises on scientific matters rank as Chinese classics in their subjects; and a few among all ranks enthusiastically accepted his religion. A native Church was established that has never ceased its ministrations, and whose

Jesuit
missions.

adherents at the present day are numbered by millions. The great observatory and mission station of Sikawei, near Shanghai—which, beside much and very varied literary activity, supplies meteorological information for the whole East Coast of Asia—traces its origin back to the munificence of one of Ricci's first converts. In his wanderings in China Ricci, of course, came upon traces of earlier Christian endeavours, for the Roman Church had had a mission in Mongol times—but it was reserved for the next generation to unearth, about 1625, the record of the yet earlier activities of the Nestorians.

For a hundred years, under Ricci, Schaal, Verbiest, and many another, the Catholic

**Successes
and failures
of Roman
Catholics in
China.** Mission pursued a career that seemed so prosperous as to afford good hope of a complete adherence of China to the Papal fold, and it

seems to be a not uncommon opinion in the Church of Rome that its victory would have been complete but for two circumstances. One was the overthrow of the old, native Ming Dynasty in the Manchu conquest, which threw power into hardier and less corrupt, more vigorous but less enlightened and civi-

lized hands. The other was the quarrel between the Jesuits on the one part and the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries on the other. The Jesuits had been the first in the field. They had adopted on the whole a very tolerant attitude towards native observances, holding that the worship of ancestors, for instance, was a purely national, civil, or political rite that could be incorporated into Christianity without offence. It might need some purifying from idolatrous taint, but in itself was at least as consistent with Christianity as the Invocation of Saints. To the others, who came later, it appeared a piece of pagan idolatry against which Christians must set a face of steel. There were other disputes as well, about the correct rendering of Christian religious terms, e.g. whether the word "T'ien," in view of its various popular, Confucianist, and other associations, could be regarded as an adequate word for "God" in the Christian sense, and so forth, which aggravated the quarrel. The controversies were submitted both to the Chinese, or, to be accurate, the Manchu Emperor, and to the Pope, and, as might have been expected, decided by each in

opposite senses. The missionaries were, of course, bound in a matter of faith to submit to the decree of Rome, and in so doing sealed their death-warrant as an important and active influence on the course of Chinese politics. If the Church of Rome was ever to prevail in China, its victory was indefinitely postponed, for it had, by impugning Chinese national customs and by appealing to and preferring the judgment of a foreign authority, in matters submitted to the decision of the Emperor, proclaimed itself a politically dangerous institution.

The first Manchu emperors were, on the whole, friendly to the missionaries. They keenly appreciated their services, for instance, in correcting the calendar, just as the last Ming emperors had welcomed the assistance of the Jesuit Adam Schaal in casting cannon of improved pattern for the war against the Manchu invaders. But, as the scope of the claims of the Church of Rome came to be more plainly realized, the formal system of historic ecclesiastical Christianity was perceived to be incompatible with much that China held to be sacred and supremely important, and the tone changed. Welcome

was followed by coldness, coldness by permitting local persecutions and popular outbreaks, local vexation by general suppression at the hands of the law. A counterblast to Christian propaganda was framed in the famous "Sacred Edict" of K'ang-hsi—sixteen maxims of orthodox Confucian morality—which was to be the watchword of China in her resistance to alien creeds. These maxims, in the next reign, that of Yung-chêng (1723 to 1736), were expanded into a set of official homilies which were ordained to be read and expounded in public twice a month throughout the Empire.

At the same time Christianity was formally proscribed under severe penalties—banishment, confiscation of property, imprisonment, torture, and death. A few missionaries were retained by the Court as astronomers, or for other assistance as scientific experts, but the rest were driven to exile or concealment; the propagation of their religion was only possible under cover of the profoundest secrecy; and the Church entered upon a long agony of a hundred years of bitter and continuous persecution at the hands of the Chinese state. Its property

Persecutions.

went to endow Buddhist monasteries or other similar institutions, but it was mainly the state, not the priesthoods, that dealt the blow.

Nothing can be more certain than that the Catholic missions effected a great work in making the West and China better acquainted with one another. Almost to our day our detailed knowledge of China has depended on the works of Navarette, De Mailla, Du Halde, etc., or on the "Annales de la Foi," the "Lettres Edifiantes," and other Catholic publications of that age, and all our maps of the interior are developments, far too little corrected and modernized, of Jesuit surveys taken mostly in the early years of the eighteenth century. Chinese knowledge of the West is similarly founded on what was taught by the missionaries of Rome in their palmy days. It is evident that there is much in the system and ideals of the Church of Rome calculated to make its ministrations appeal with powerful attraction to the Chinese mind. It is a Church that founds strong communities among the Chinese, which strike their roots deep into the soil of

Estimate of
Catholic
Mission
operations.

Chinese society, continuing generation after generation a generally quiet, unobtrusive life.

Yet I shall be expressing no unfamiliar thought if I should suggest that in the eighteenth century, or the seventeenth century, or even in the sixteenth century, the Church of Rome no longer stood for what was most vital in the religious life of Europe, and was no longer, as it might at an earlier stage have been, the agency best fitted to awaken China to the highest developments of either Western civilization or even Christian standards of life and conduct. It had a great deal to teach. Its ministers were often men of broad culture; they were almost always men of picked ability; their courage and devotion were beyond praise; they were distinguished in works of charity, and in the piety and purity of their lives. By the vows of their calling their lives were given wholly to the work they had in hand: China was not for them merely a place of temporary residence, but the land wherein they were to labour till the hour of their death—if need be, till the day of martyrdom for their faith.

Yet their teaching was necessarily bound up with forms of ritual, with habits of thought and belief, with which Europe had long been dissatisfied, from which Europe—both in Protestant countries and in those which remained outwardly Catholic—was endeavouring, not without success, to emancipate itself. Many of their Church's observances were scarcely less superstitious than those of the Buddhist and Taoist creeds which it sought to correct, and it was widely defaced by a spirit of exclusiveness, sometimes degenerating into savage bigotry, towards those outside its fold, from which the native Chinese religions were, at least as a rule, comparatively free. To many in Europe it had long seemed to stand for a mediæval scholasticism, for an arbitrary traditional authority, for a priestly control under which no man could call his soul his own, and to press this side of its activity with far more insistence than those universal and eternal experiences which uplift the heart, than modesty, mercy, and justice, out of which all living religious inspiration springs. Its mechanical claim to obedience to every detail of its system seemed to bring it, over and over again, into conflict

with the knowledge, the reason, the conscience, the sense of truth and faith and hope, and widening charity of the world which it professed to enlighten and guide.

However little the Chinese might be acquainted with Western controversies, there were and are many among them to whom the system of the Church of Rome seemed to be very much the same thing as the popular temple worships of China. Disguised under a change of name, its Virgin and Saints seemed to be Kuanyin and the Bodhisattvas, its Chiao-Huang or Pope to be simply a Western variant upon a well-known Tibetan theme. In a word, for all its profession of catholicity, may it not have been that the Church of Rome was not sufficiently catholic, and that it was the fact of this want of catholicity that provoked the disasters which it had to encounter?

In addition to the missions of the Church of Rome, the Church of Russia has maintained, ever since the Treaty of Nerchinsk, 1689, a college at Peking, but it has not, as it has in Japan, succeeded in making any deep impression on native religious life.

There are Russian churches at a few of the Chinese ports, but, except that they minister to the local Russian communities, they are as yet of little importance in the country.

X

THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY: THE
CONTACT OF
CHINA AND
MODERN IDEALS

CHAPTER X

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE CONTACT OF CHINA AND MODERN IDEALS

It was not till the nineteenth century that China became in any real sense aware that Europe had other religious or intellectual ideas to impart than those of the Roman Catholic Missions. It is true that Dutch and English traders had visited the country from the third and fourth decades of the seventeenth century, and, as time went on, their enterprises grew to a certain importance. During the Dutch occupation of Formosa, down to the conquest of the island by the Manchus, about 1670, a very creditable effort was made by Protestant missionaries to civilize the native tribes, but it never extended to the mainland, and it perished in the conquest. Sixty years later, at the very moment when Christian mission enterprise was proscribed, foreign maritime trade of

all sorts was restricted to the one port of Canton, and even there harassed by elaborate and burdensome conditions; and this continued during all the remaining period of the greatness of the Manchu Dynasty. Efforts were made from time to time to secure openings for a wider intercourse, but until the 'thirties of the last century they came to very little. China was practically a closed country, living its own life, recovering amazingly from the terrible convulsions which had afflicted it before, during, and for a generation after the conquest, but conscious of no reason why its people should question the all-sufficiency of the organization and equipment which they had inherited from their ancestors.

Christianity was not again officially tolerated until treaties came to be negotiated with the

Reasons of
opposition
to foreign
mission
enterprise.

Western Powers after the close of the unsuccessful war with England of 1840-1842. The toleration then accorded, being naturally regarded as imposed on China from outside by superior force, was widely resented both by the masses and by the upholders of the old political order, and this fact led in many respects to a most unfortunate state of affairs.

On the one hand, Christian missions were tempted to rely on the support of the governments and consuls of their home lands: on the other, governments and their representatives could not avoid frequent interferences to check acts of persecution and annoyance, if they were to see that the provisions of treaties were not made a laughing-stock or reduced to a dead letter. To permit a foreigner to suffer pillage or insult or murder without insisting upon proper reparation might at any moment and easily provoke a storm of riot whose reverberations involved a whole province, and might lead to very delicate political, diplomatic, and commercial complications. Even if humanity had permitted, it could never be a question simply of letting individuals court martyrdom by taking their lives in their own hands. Native converts, again, feeling the attitude of their own officials to be prejudiced or unfriendly, came to regard themselves as permanently in opposition to those officials, and behaved so as to create the suspicion of either being infected with disloyalty or of aiming to form an *imperium in imperio* under the protection of foreigners. Some, at any rate, of the

missions, especially those of the Roman Church, also assumed the airs of official rank: bishops would expect the recognition due to their hierarchical position, and to be treated as the social equals of governors of provinces; priests, perhaps, as those of district magistrates. Attempts to resume Church property, that had been sequestered over a century before, also led to much bitterness. And other causes of offence on both sides were not lacking.

It is easy to see how, among a suspicious, credulous, and ignorant population, proud of its national traditions and resentful of any suggestion of inferiority, an atmosphere could be created, under such circumstances, in which Christian mission work, either Protestant or Catholic, could only be carried on under grave disabilities, in the face of constant opposition, growing at times to deadly and murderous hatred. Even if there had never been a tactless word spoken, or a foolish act done by any missionary in China, the progress of mission work in such an atmosphere could only be slow and partial, for every institution, however inspired by purely unworldly, unselfish, and humanitarian

aims — schools, hospitals, medical work, orphanages, everything—laboured under the taint of a suspicion of dark, ulterior, unfriendly motives, which it long seemed impossible to shake off.

In the days of persecution a habit of secrecy—naturally grew up. Secrecy begat suspicion: suspicion was ready to believe all evil of the stranger in the land. The unction of the sick and dying, the rescuing and baptism of abandoned foundlings, were widely believed to be connected with, or to cloak, ritual practices and dark magic of the most revolting kinds. “Hao hua,” say the Chinese, “pu pei jên: pei jên mei hao hua.”—Good words are not said behind men’s backs; what is said behind the back is not good.

And it would be foolish to pretend that no provocation was ever given. The missionaries were a section of the foreign community which grew up with the opening of trade in and around the seaports of China, and that community was composed of a very mixed population, of many nationalities and blendings of nationalities. I would not have you suppose that their lives are, or ever have been, worse in the mass than those of other

people. The proportion of men of high personal character and of strict commercial integrity, as well as of energy, enterprise, and administrative ability—of picked men, in fact, in all departments of activity—has been, I venture to maintain, at all times unusually high among the foreign communities of China. But these communities were, especially in the early days, peculiarly situated. I take it that in every seaport town in the world there are elements that do not show human nature at its best. Long severance from home ties and associations, the sense of exile in some, the love of adventure in others in others, again, the proud and overbearing attitude of conscious superiority which race prejudice engenders in vulgar minds, contact with a people with whom real intellectual intercourse is difficult, climatic influences, either depressing or unduly stimulating, numerous opportunities and temptations to indulgence and excess, the cheapness of some kinds of service, the extreme rarity and expensiveness, even total absence of worthier distractions in time of leisure from business cares, the difficulty of carrying on family life as it is understood in the home

lands, the daily immersion in the monotony of petty, local, or personal cares, varied by occasional sudden and unforeseen storms of stress and crisis, upsetting all calculations of the normal and probable, the imperfect communication with and knowledge of the living interests of the wider world outside, have very likely lowered the tone of some sections of the foreign communities in China. At any rate the accusation is sometimes made that the evil example of the lives of the foreign lay population of the "ports" has had a deleterious effect upon missionary prospects, and, much as I am inclined to discount the accusation, it is not possible to dismiss it as an absurdity. The European in China is liable to be judged by his native critics in the mass: if foreign teachers are to have a hearing, they must meet the native who insists that foreigners should practise what they preach.

This applies, too, to the action of foreign states in their corporate dealings with the Chinese people, and here again we are confronted with a record that is not always ideal. There have been prolonged and tangled controversies, of which some have

been the cause, or at least the occasion, of wars, wherein it is by no means impossible to uphold the argument that, on the balance, the foreign, Christian Power was the more to blame. It would be out of place to attempt a reasoned disquisition on such matters, as, e.g. the importation of Indian opium into China, the treatment of Chinese labourers and emigrants abroad, or the question whether the redress of injuries has not sometimes been sought in a spirit of arrogance and vindictiveness. Summary judgments on such questions are apt to be more unjust than epigrams usually are: the facts are curiously complex, and well-informed men, equally animated with the desire to be fair-minded, have come to discrepant and contradictory conclusions: those who have tried most earnestly to see both sides have, perhaps, balanced longest. Yet the existence of such questions, admittedly involving important moral issues, has notoriously been a stumbling-block in the path of mutual understanding and the growth of good-will.

It must be freely granted that among the missionary body there has been little ground for personal, moral scandal; but it would be

by no means impossible to quote cases of ignorant or fanatical narrow-mindedness, of zeal outrunning discretion, of bigotry and theological bitterness, both between competing Christian denominations and between all exponents of Christianity and the people they had come to influence and convert. And there has sometimes been, in some native circles, a certain element of hypocrisy and self-seeking, a tendency to see in the Church a benefit society whose by-laws and formulas could be learnt by heart, and when learnt used as a lever for purchasing immunity from civil embarrassments, from the consequences of wrongdoing, even as a means for indulging vengeance upon private enemies. Some strange doings that came to my knowledge in the province of Kiangsi in the years 1901 and 1902 rather opened my eyes to the possible developments of things in China, should religion become the battle-ground of contending factions, and I dare say they could be matched in many provinces.

When to these causes of offence we add the claim of some professing Christians to be members of the only true Church, that Church being in their eyes the exclusive

vehicle of Divine grace, or of salvation for mankind, and the attitude of superiority to all outsiders, "heathen" or other, which such a claim is apt to encourage, we can have no difficulty in seeing how enormous the handicap has been under which all forms of Christian endeavour have necessarily laboured.

Indeed, had there been any probability that the net result of Christian activity in China would only be to substitute for Buddhist rites and forms the rites and forms of some professedly Christian sectarianism, for the superstitions of the Taoist other superstitions that have grown up around the organizations of Rome or of Little Bethel, for the pretensions of the Confucian orthodox some other "orthodoxy" equally arrogant, it might well be questioned whether we should be justified in regarding the success of Christianity, of any kind, as a subject for satisfaction. Fortunately, apart from all other causes, the very divisions of the Christian Church were in themselves security enough against the realization of any such result. Wherever a Chinese observer of Christianity had sufficient intelligence to go beneath the superficialities of its phenomena,

Spread of the
Christian
spirit.

or to compare one body with another, he would be bound to inquire what it was, after all, that all these sects and missions had in common. If they co-operated with one another—and, in justice to them all, it must be said that they generally co-operated, and co-operated increasingly as time went on—why did they co-operate? What was the common element that really inspired at bottom all this various activity? What was the general outfit, mental, moral, material, of the societies in which Christianity, of any kind, prevailed? Plainly there was a common element, and it must be something more fundamental than the outward forms, the ceremonies, the services, even the theological statements of belief, however insistent the teachers of Christianity themselves might be that these things were essential to the substance of their faith.

Might these not, one and all, be merely institutions of human ordinance, of temporary and local utility, if of any utility at all—the garments with which the Christian spirit had clothed itself during the centuries of its growth as a Western thing—and Christianity itself be a temper of the human soul? Might not all the paraphernalia of organization be simply

the by-laws adopted by Western Christian societies for their own convenience in their attempt to explain the workings of that spirit in the examples of it whom they revered? What if the test of true priesthood should be, not adherence to this or that form of communion, or ordination in this or that society, but a ministry known by its fruits, and Hugh Latimer have been right when he declared that a bishop is "that man, whatsoever he be, that hath a flock to be taught of him"? What if it be true, as said by one who lighted an even brighter candle in the world than Latimer, that all men shall know who are Christ's disciples by their loving one another? Some form, some organization is necessary if men are to combine together for any common purpose, but may not the choice of form be solely a question of practical utility, open to human judgment and human revision and amendment, not part of the substance of Christianity at all?

It would be difficult enough to select among the existing Christian teachings any doctrinal basis from which a message could be addressed, in the name of them all, to the people of China. Not only would there be no agree-

ment as to those questions upon which contention and division have arisen in the West, but China herself would supply a plentiful crop of fresh dividing lines. There is little more chance now than there was three hundred years ago that students of Chinese phenomena should agree as to the exact point where commemoration of ancestors ceases to be an innocent, useful, and laudable bond of civil society, and becomes an idolatry which no Christian community could consent to bind itself to observe.

Yet I believe Christianity has a message to impart and that Christians have, in a very considerable measure, got that message delivered to the Chinese and understood by them.

Some will, I believe, be found to agree with me that, beyond all the forms in which Christian teaching has sought to express itself, there exists, creating them, not created by them, a Christian spirit and a Christian life; that this spirit and life are perfectly definite and characteristic, and, wherever they are manifested, that there is the reality behind Christian teaching.

Florence Nightingale, if she had denominational leanings at all, was a Unitarian;

Father Damien was a Roman Catholic ; Dr. Jackson of Mukden was a Presbyterian ; the men, women, and children who met their martyrdom at T'aiyuan in 1900 belonged to many communions—just as those did who went down with the *Titanic* ; it does not matter what Church Captain Scott of the *Terra Nova* belonged to. There are thousands and thousands more. They are the salt of the earth ; they are the light of the world : their theological opinions have nothing to do with it. But this is true : one and all they walk, or try to walk, in the same footsteps. According to their various lights and various opportunities they meet life and death as followers of one example. They may not meet by the same altars to partake of the same bread and wine, but wherever they meet, it is with reconciled hearts, with minds full of the memory of their Master, communicating His spiritual presence one to another. Where that spirit dwells, no outward form can make such fellowship more, no absence of form can make it less, than the Eucharist of the universal Church of Christ. They are Christians, whatever they believe or disbelieve about services or creeds.

Dr. Gore, Bishop of Oxford, has lately said, "If I am to judge by the fruits of religion as I see them in life, I should be disposed to rank the Friends among the highest in the Kingdom of God, and they have no ministry and no sacraments." Why not, if they deserve it, so rank them? In the long run it is by its fruits that religion is judged.

Let us try to see what Christianity, so understood, might find to say to China.

In the face of many of the phenomena presented by China—in the face of preventible famine and pestilence, of official corruption, judicial torture, family oppression, the stagnant deadness of an arrested civilization, where public opinion seems paralysed as a force for dealing with patent evils; in the face of the buying and selling of human beings, or of justice, of infanticide and occasional suttee, of brigandage and civil war, of foot-binding and enslavement to the opium habit, and all the breed of ignorance, misery, and impurity which are such constant features of every part of the country—Christians will, no doubt, have different suggestions to make in regard to details. They may not be prepared with any cut-and-dried remedy, but

they will see these things from a common standpoint, and we know instinctively what that standpoint will be ; they will regard these, and all such evils all the world over, as they regard them in their own lands—that is, as problems to be wrestled with, which no failures and no disappointments can permit us to set on one side. Everywhere, at all times, the Christian conscience knows that it stands or falls by a judgment less concerned with forms and professions than with ministry to its great Awakener, through service done to the least of His brethren in their hours of hunger or thirst or loneliness or bondage.

And in some measure the Christian standpoint is bound to be taken up by every man of Western race who finds himself confronted with these problems of Chinese life—with the facts of the Chinese world. It is not that there is such a thing as a Christian nation in the world. Western man is not anywhere thoroughly or even generally Christian in the mass. But at the back of his consciousness there is almost always some echo of the Christian life that sooner or later will tell upon some part of his conduct, re-

proving even where it fails to overcome the promptings of indolence, vindictiveness, selfishness, sensuality, or dishonesty. He is not a consistent Christian all the time: he is carried away in all sorts of other directions. Yet there are moments of reflection which cause him to feel and act as a Christian part of the time, from pride or from shame, even where sustained religious motives are lacking. And so there is an approximation between the average standard of Western conduct and the conduct that the acceptance of the Christian standpoint would enjoin.

This Christian standpoint is not wholly different in principle from the high-water marks of Confucian or Buddhist teaching: all that can be claimed for it is that it is more energetic, more active, more hopeful. In the face of the things to which I have alluded, it will be inclined, in a way that has never been widely characteristic of Confucian or Buddhist communities, to get up, to go out, to do something. Some, no doubt, will counsel prudence, patience, study of causes, delay—to measure obstacles, at any rate, before attacking them blindfold—but no Christian will consent to sit down resignedly

with idle hands and see evil have its way. He sees in it a problem which it is his duty to deal with. Some will remember that there are similar, just as pressing, evils nearer home, but on the whole you will find that the charity which is for ever reminding itself that charity begins at home is of a sort that is apt to stay there, never getting beyond its beginnings, even if it does not let those beginnings perish from neglect and inanition. The spirit, the reality behind Christian teaching, embraces the whole world in its brotherhood. At its best it is a thing neither obtrusive nor noisy: its operation is not to destroy the varieties of human character and equipment, but to use the diverse talents of each individual, to show each how he can rise to the fullest stature of his own self, by causing each to feel that he is living in a presence, like that described in the little story or parable called "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," before which the meanness of his lower impulses cannot stand. Expand that tale of a London lodging-house to the world, and you will see what the Christianizing of the world would be. That is the reality which Christian forms seek to

explain, and in some measure the opening of China to the Western world has brought that reality to the conscious notice of the Chinese people.

To that reality, that inward spirit, wherever and with whatever qualifications and inconsistencies it has showed itself, many in China have been attracted to whom the letter of all Western forms of worship was meaningless or repellent or suspect. In this sense Christianity extended far and wide beyond the limits of formal conversion or church membership. The missionaries had, in fact, planted a leaven in the midst of China, working slowly and imperceptibly, but in the end leavening the whole lump. It was seen in a measure that Christianity was not merely a foreign thing, but a thing that could be expressed in terms of Chinese thought for Chinese needs.

When we think of it, can we doubt in what spirit Jesus Himself would have lived and suffered had He appeared among men in Chinese instead of Syrian surroundings? Might He not have quoted the Odes as He quoted the Psalms? Might not the Book of Rites have stood for the "Law"; the Lun-yü,

the Tao-Tê Ching, Mencius, for the "Prophets"? Might He not have found a similar field for similar parables among the villages and cypress groves that nestle under the shadow of T'ai-shan as among the hills and along the lake shores of Galilee? Would there not have been scribes and Pharisees around him in Loyang and Ch'angan and Pien-liang, even as there were in Jerusalem? Many details of the setting would have been Chinese instead of Jewish, but the main action of the drama might well have been the same; it would have been the same gospel conveying the same inward message; its appeal would have lost nothing for being expressed in terms of Chinese thought and illustrated with Chinese examples. The Kingdom might still have been likened to leaven mixed in measures of native meal.

I am speaking of things whereof it is perhaps sometimes difficult to judge, for Chinese are commonly reticent about their deeper feelings. Yet I have gathered from conversations with natives, and other observation, many an indication of the value that they—not being professed Christians—attached to the Christian message. I have several

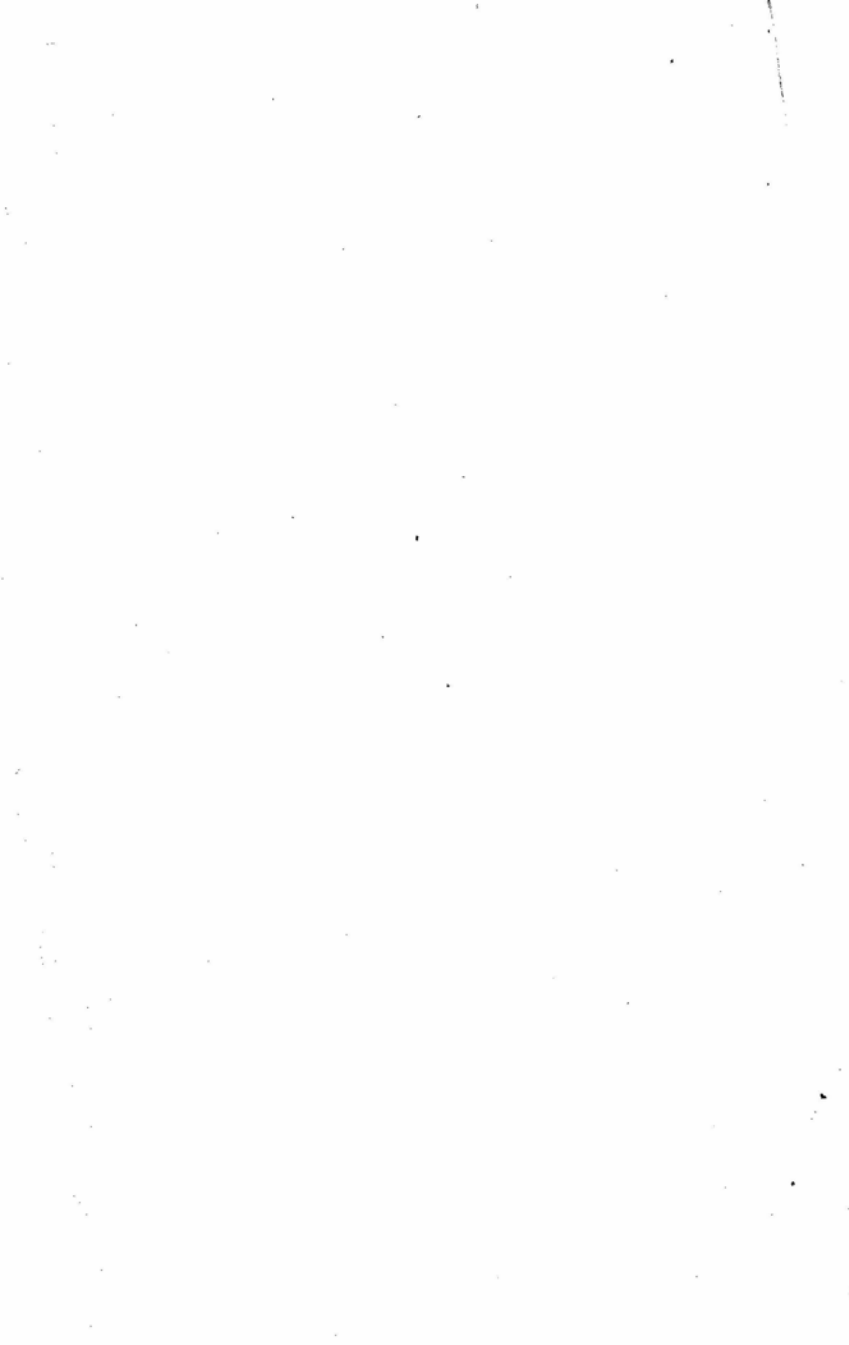
times found such a state of things as this : that a man would have read the whole or greater part of the New Testament, to find that while it contained incidents and implications which seemed to him either incredible or of no interest, yet he perceived a "T'ien Tao"—a "Way of God"—in it, which lifted its teaching high above the traditional Three Teachings of China, so that it was a living thing, while they, in spite of much utility and many excellences, were dead things now, which had run their course and had their day. I remember one such conversation with a man who was in my service as a Chinese clerk in the years 1897 and 1898, but afterwards took a better place in the Postal Department—following on a talk about the anti-foreign riots of 1891. In 1891 he had been very young, and had more than half believed, as did his relations and companions, the inflammatory tales then current about foreign missionaries mutilating Chinese children, drugging, poisoning, and outraging people, covering every enormity with a hypocritical mask of pretended zeal for charity and good works, etc., etc., which, circulated in millions by means of posters, picture-books, verses, and tracts,

frequently through the agency of pawnshops owned and managed by a syndicate of agitators from the "anti-foreign" province of Hunan, were setting the whole of Central China in a blaze of indignant excitement. Where there was so much smoke, decent people felt confident that these tales, however embellished by exaggeration, must have some basis in fact; and my clerk had thought so too and had been indignant accordingly. Yet that agitation led him to look into the question, to procure and read the foreigners' books, particularly the New Testament, with the result that, while he told me that, being unable to accept the missionaries' doctrine, on such points as the divinity of Jesus, he could not join their Church as a member, yet he felt sure that Christianity was the live force in China in our days, in that it taught that God lives in man, that we are the temples of a living God.

NOTE

An illustration of the hold that Christianity has taken on Chinese thought meets me as I revise these pages. The local native newspaper of the Port of Newchwang, published by the Chinese merchants' guild of the port, for November 13, 1914, has a leading article entitled "The Cost of the War Fever in Europe." The article contains two quotations, both from Saint Matthew's Gospel, to enforce upon the peoples of

Europe that the good tree bears good fruit and the evil tree evil fruit, and that men should lay up for themselves treasure in heaven. Allow that the subject lends itself to lecturing the European out of his own sacred books, yet it is remarkable that a Chinese newspaper, writing for a Chinese commercial public, should go to this source for its illustrations, apparently quite confident that the force and application of the passages cited will come home to and be familiar to native readers.



XI

**THE
MODERN
TRANSFORMATION**



CHAPTER XI

THE MODERN TRANSFORMATION

IN the last chapter we have in a sense anticipated the course of events to describe a result which eventually followed from the modern intercourse of China with the outside world: it is therefore necessary to retrace our steps to a point of time when the isolation of the Chinese world had not been seriously infringed. To the date of the abdication, full of years and glory, of the great Manchu Emperor Ch'ien Lung in 1796 it was possible for Europe and China to live lives apart, an occasional subject of speculative interest each to the other, but not practically influencing one another in any way. But that state of things was wholly incompatible with the needs, ambitions, and equipment of the age that had dawned: intercourse, even widening in its scope, had to come, and with intercourse some accommodation and understanding of points of view.

Evidently the Protestant Europe of a hun-

dred years ago could no more consent than could the commercial or the political forces of the world to be wholly indifferent to China. As early as 1807 Robert Morrison commenced his labours as a missionary to the Chinese; in 1815 he had produced the first translation of the Scriptures and was at work upon the first Chinese-English dictionary; and he was followed by an unbroken stream of colleagues and successors. Few at first, but making up in industry and ardour what they lacked in numbers, and representing perhaps, in some respects, what the present generation would style a rather narrow type of Protestantism, they nevertheless introduced a leaven of modern ideas which was destined in the course of time, and in co-operation with all manner of other influences, to set in motion a train of transformations the importance of whose workings the world is at length beginning to realize.

The beginning of this movement coincides in point of time with the decline of the Manchu Dynasty. In 1796, with the abdica-

Conflict
between old
and new
ideals.

tion at the age of eighty-two of the magnificent and venerable Ch'ien Lung—the last of the great Manchu emperors—China entered upon one of her

recurrent eras of political weakness and decrepitude. A generation had been born who could not look the facts of the world in the face and remain satisfied with the simple faith in the all-sufficiency of Chinese organization which had seemed an axiom to their fathers. The old order could only maintain its prestige in so far as it was buttressed by ignorance: it had to be obscurantist to live. Rebellions and agitations of all sorts convulsed the country, particularly the southern provinces, where Manchu rule, even before it had revealed itself to be corrupt and incompetent, had always been profoundly detested as alien and barbarian. And now, under the successors, always weak and often unworthy, of the great Manchu sovereigns, the effete Manchus of the nineteenth century, idle paupers of the state, drawing their doles for military service that they had long been utterly unfitted to render, were not only detested but despised.

It was inevitable that some among these disturbances should be coloured by the new ideas slowly filtering in from the European world. The greatest of the rebellions of the century, that known as the Ch'ang-mao (Long Hair) or

Hung Hsiu-ch'uan and the T'ai-p'ings.

T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, traced its origin to a movement which, with all its vagaries and excesses, drew its inspiration directly from the Bible and from the circulation of Protestant tracts. A Cantonese schoolmaster, Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, disappointed at failure in the Public Examinations, became the founder of a new sect—the Pai Shang-ti Hui, or "God Worshippers." At one period he had been under the influence of a Protestant missionary—a certain Mr. J. J. Roberts—from whom he and his colleagues, Liang Ah-fa and others, obtained literature which seemed to open up a new world to their minds. By and by they beheld visions and dreamed dreams. It was revealed to Hung Hsiu-ch'uan in a trance that he was no other than the younger brother of Jesus Christ, and equally the Son of God. He was taken up in the spirit into heaven and received a mandate from the Father to resist and destroy idolatry, especially to free the land from the tyranny of the Manchu "imps." Official opposition and persecution supplied the needed stimulus and provocation to swell this fancy into a formidable rebellion. Purely local at first—indeed, very similar in its manifestations to many another outflowing

of religious revivalist enthusiasm or reforming zeal which men of after-ages have learnt to remember with affectionate and grateful veneration, it quickly gathered to itself all the forces of southern discontent—all the fanaticism and all the misery and all the blind, unreasoning passion that had festered for a hundred and fifty years throughout half a dozen provinces. By 1853 the Heavenly Prince of the Kingdom of Great Peace—T'ai-p'ing Kuo T'ien Wang—had established a government—of a strange and terrible sort—at Nanking, and his armies were spreading terror and devastation far and wide over the country. He had ascended into a high mountain of success whence the devil of self-esteem and worldly ambition had shown him all the kingdoms of the earth and their glory—and, bowing down to secure that possession, he found for himself insanity and a suicide's death, for his country fifteen years of the most destructive civil war in the modern annals of mankind. Twenty million lives is the lowest estimate at which we have ever seen put the cost of that rebellion and its suppression.

China in those middle years of the century passed through a terrible agony. The

foreigner was battering at her gates, imposing humiliating treaties, insisting on the opening of ports for trade, driving her
Dark days. emperor—a very worthless emperor—from her capital, bending to submission a proud and ignorant, but hopelessly corrupt, decrepit, and distracted government. Misrule of every kind was rampant. Flood and famine and pestilence on a huge scale brought death to millions and ruin to scores of millions in province after province. A despairing attachment to ancient forms, a haughty exclusiveness of conservatism, seemed to be the only answer that the ruling class had to make to the imperious insistence of the West to be admitted into the Chinese world. And all the while the whole of the Mahometan provinces were ablaze in a series of rebellions, wherein the loss of life, the battles, and the massacres, one side and another, were scarcely less than those of the T'ai-p'ing War.

For a while it seemed as if the old party, as the party of order, the party possessed of administrative experience, the party that could appeal to the old traditional loyalties and reverences of the Chinese people, had re-seated itself in power—or, at any rate, that the

conflict between the Chinese world and modern ideas would result in a compromise that would leave the essential institutions of the country still erect, if not wholly unaltered. Over and over again men said that the choice lay between the "Manchus" and "anarchy," and, remembering as they did the days of the T'ai-p'ing Terror, they elected to give the old order another chance.

But the leaven at work was far too powerful for any such partial result to be permanent. Little by little, as the nineteenth century ran its troubled and tragic course, one element of reaction, of ignorance, of ancient tradition after another, weakened and yielded.

This is not the place to relate the whole modern history of China. In many respects it is a very terrible story, written in characters of fire and blood—a story of warfare and passion, of vain, extravagant hopes, of failures, disillusionments and disappointments, often of what has seemed sheer blindness and stupidity, wherein the voices of statesmanship, of reason, and of religion have had a difficulty to make themselves heard. Backwards and forwards the pendulum has swung, from the hot fit of precipitancy to the cold fit of

cowardice and despair, from wild belief in an immediate millennium to cynical assertion of the vested rights of every hoary abuse. Yet it is in such purging fires that all great forward movements of mankind are born: they are the price of human progress, the pledge that advancement will be permanent, will be valued, will be worth while.

We cannot and do not defend all that is done in such crises of human development. It is stupid to persecute, it is cruel to burn and slay. Yet without martyrdom and suffering what cause in the world has ever come to fruition, has ever come even to understand itself? What China was entering upon was no little superficial change, but the equivalent to her of all that the Revival of Learning, the Protestant Reformation, and the struggles for political, religious, and social freedom of the last four hundred years have been to us. It is a movement on the same scale; indeed, it is an extension to Asiatic surroundings of the same movement—the same break-up of mediævalism. It would be contrary to all human experience if such a process were not marked by similar phenomena, similar alternations of fortune, similar violences, similar

victories and defeats. Through it all we have to look at the broad, big results, and not be either over sanguine or over despondent if the surface currents seem to sway at any given moment overwhelmingly this way or that. A vast paper reformation one day may be only the prelude to a storm of reactionary bigotry the next, but through both, under the surface, the trend of events goes steadily, irresistibly onward.

There have been moments when the West has seemed in Chinese society a great disruptive force, breaking all ties and all traditions, as if its message were to bring not peace but a sword—the Western Terror, the “White Peril.” But along with this Western Terror, this pressure of the “White Peril” upon the old and crumbling fabric of Chinese ideas, traditions, and institutions, there arose a great example of how such changes as were daily becoming more visibly inevitable in China could be carried through—had, in fact, been carried through—without national disruption—the example of Japan. There, right at her doors, China could see a country, which had lately been just as reactionary and secluded as her-

The example
of Japan.

self, renewing its life by drinking freely of all that the West had to offer, yet animated with an intensity of passionate patriotism the like of which the world has perhaps never witnessed. And when that new Japan had proved itself not only capable of humiliating China, but victorious over a first-class European Power, the hour for revolution had struck for China. The contagion of the Japanese example was the one stimulus needed to fire the whole magazine of combustible elements fermenting in China.

The preparations for this revolution had long been brewing. They include all the struggles of which the present generation has been a witness. To relate them, I should have to explain how, if foreigners have sometimes taken a mean advantage of Chinese weakness and disunion, native Chinese have at all times inflicted on their country wrongs and injuries that no foreign enemy could have brought upon her, till her best friends felt, despairingly, that, however beset by actual and possible foes, China was certain to be her own worst enemy in every crisis. I should have to describe the various parties and the

The contending forces in China.

forces they represent — the anti-Christian propaganda of Chou Han and the old Hunan faction of blind fanaticism, with its campaign of filth and riot; the fatal alliance of the Manchus and the mob which culminated in the chaotic madness of Boxerism and sealed the discredit of the old order in 1900—to show how truculence and obsequiousness are but opposite faces of the same character, to thread the mazes of an exasperating diplomacy which held cunning to be the crown of statecraft, but also to admit that the constant endeavour to set one foreign influence against another, in the — very human — desire of “dishing” them all, was too often admirably seconded by the selfishness, jealousy, and ignorance of those foreigners whose discomfiture and humiliation it was desired to bring about. Having dealt with the forces of reaction, I should have to depict the tendencies on the other side—the gradual development of trade and wealth, the shifting of weight and influence, year by year, from the old mandarin and narrowly Confucian literate class to classes less hidebound in antique ruts, the introduction of new conveniences, modern inventions, facilities for

travel, communication, interchange of ideas as well as of goods, the influence of newspapers, of hospitals, of schools, of churches, of emigration to the Straits Settlements, to the Dutch and British Colonies of the Southern Seas, later to America and other Western countries, and especially of the rush of students to Japan—to tell of colleges which profess to impart complete instruction in all branches of the New Learning in a three months' course, to dilate upon the features of "Young China," too often superficial, crude, anarchic, unmannerly, ardent, puerile, preposterously vain—ignorantly playing with every Western idea and invention like a child with a new toy—concerned too often merely with the external and the trivial, thinking it can buy the results of modern knowledge without the labour of modern training, with no sort of appreciation of the intellectual, still less of the moral forces that have gone to the shaping of the civilization in whose vulgarities it is in such a hurry to masquerade. Yet I should have to probe beneath the surface of this ebullition, and tell that, however some of its exponents may burn their inexperienced fingers to-day or to-morrow, there

are among this party those who hold the keys of the future, and who are engaged in an enterprise of reform in which there can be neither flinching nor turning back.

The intellectual basis of all this movement is plain enough. There has arisen before the eyes of the East a dazzling and bewildering vision—the material greatness, the variety, the scientific appliances and inventions of Western civilization. To realize that vision among themselves, to be in all outward things the equals of the white man, is the very natural ambition of Young China. China is not prepared to admit any sort of inherent inferiority in herself as compared with the modern, Western world. Her people are not less ingenious, and are almost if not quite as numerous as the people of Europe. The natural resources of their country are as great, its soil as fertile, its contribution in art, in history, in useful inventions, in literary and intellectual achievements, to the common stock of mankind, is enough to inspire its people with pride in themselves and in their past. What is there to prevent them being the equals, the successful competitors, of the white races? What,

Intellectual
basis of the
revolution.

indeed—except the dead-weight of an antiquated outfit of hoary traditions, the tyranny of rites and systems of ceremony and reverence, whose usefulness has long since passed away?

For, whether we view the fact with satisfaction or with misgiving, the old ties—the old belief in a divinely appointed emperor and the old belief in the sufficiency of the classical Confucian examination system, for instance—that were for ages the moral support upon which the unity of the Chinese people rested, have suffered irrevocable shipwreck, and ceased to carry conviction to minds equipped with a sense of the realities of the modern world.

And besides this dazzling vision, there has come over large sections of China a great fear—the fear of the West, of Western interference and conquest; the fear that, unless China arms herself at all points and at once with the full panoply of Western material force, so that she can meet the white man on equal terms in war, she must perish, enslaved or destroyed by the white races, sooner or later; that the ultimate ambition of the foreigners within her gates is to “fên kua,” to “split

up the melon" among themselves, after who knows how much mutual struggling—mainly at the cost of her own devastation—over the pieces. This fear—and dare we say it is an unnatural and wholly baseless fear?—is the one platform that the old party and the bulk of the new party in China have in common.

That much is plain, but were that all the upshot could only be choice between a relentless despotism, native or foreign, and the dissolution of civilized society. Yet, whether or not approaches must be endured to one or both of these alternatives (and symptoms of both are not lacking: almost any issue of newspapers dealing with Chinese affairs for the last year would afford suggestions of the possible imminence of either or both), it is plain too that, in some degree, these modern movements have found a moral basis in ethical conceptions suggested or greatly strengthened by contact with Western ideas, as well as in the glamour of Western material success. One must gratefully admit that despite many ugly incidents—outbreaks of massacre and pillage of the helpless, reckless rebellions ruthlessly repressed—the recent revolution and its sequels have so far been, by

comparison with previous Chinese political typhoons—with the agony which preceded the collapse of the Mings, for instance, or the T'ai-p'ing War—under the control of an awakened public conscience, open to the appeals of reason and humanity. And it is clear that, so far as this has been the case, that awakened public conscience has based itself, not so much upon whatever it might find in the old traditional moralities of China, as on the influence, direct or indirect, of Christian teaching, of a percolation of Christian thought which not only includes those who accept the systematic doctrine of distinctive Christian Churches but overflows far beyond their borders.

Nevertheless, no one contemplating recent events, or attempting to estimate the temptations and trials through which China is bound to pass in this period of transformation and transition, can avoid misgiving of the gravest kind unless the moral side of the new movements should come to rest upon a far surer and firmer basis than any that is at present generally apparent.

Need of a
firmer moral
basis.

Efforts are indeed being made, from the

standpoint of native Chinese culture, to find such a basis, but they do not look convincingly hopeful. For instance, in the last few years, and especially since the proclamation of the republic, a tendency has shown itself in influential native quarters towards the deification of Confucius, the assertion of a formal dogma that Confucius is the "equal of Heaven," and is himself God—coupled with a demand that Confucianism, so dogmatized, should be promulgated as the national state religion. From other quarters these developments of "orthodoxy" are opposed, and it is difficult to believe that so artificial a dogma-mongering can meet with much acceptance among minds even partially awake to the broadening tendencies of the age. The modern world, in China as elsewhere, craves for a strengthening of the inward forces that work for seriousness, for earnest pursuit of truth and right, for more light, more understanding, not for a tightening of externally imposed schemes of dogma and ritual observance.

I am not a prophet. It is given to no man to see the details of the future, even if the lessons of the past may help in guessing

the probable tendencies of the time to come. But evidently the great need of China is a convincing and satisfying restatement of Religion, a restatement in harmony with the requirements and the knowledge of the present day. Such a restatement, like all reformations, may very likely—nay, it must certainly—comprise a return to the true, underlying principles of older expressions of religious inspiration. It must study, understand, and take into account the whole past. It cannot be wholly destructive nor wholly exotic.

Nor is such a reformation from within illogical or inconsistent with devotion to abstract truth, for the root principles of religion are eternal and catholic, not confined to any age or any people, or any Church, or any body of tradition. Just as Christianity, by widening, generalizing, and “depolarizing” the earlier, transitory system of the Jews, expanded into a restatement of religious principles adequate to the needs and hopes of the entire Western world, may not the present or the next age, as a time wherein—in spite of temporary whirlwinds of reaction—all national and racial distinctions are visibly softening to effacement in an intricacy of mutual intercourse

and mutual obligations embracing all mankind, such as no earlier period of history has witnessed or imagined, give birth to a widening, generalizing, and "depolarizing" of all local faiths, before which the transitory elements of all will be winnowed out from whatever each contains of abiding and indestructible spiritual strength.

The revelation of God is a continuing revelation, manifested in each generation to the living, not to the dead, given to the East as well as to the West. What is required of all men is to do justly, to love mercy, to walk modestly, and under whatever forms of worship they shall ascend into the hill of the Lord and stand in His holy place, who are of clean hands and a pure heart, who do not lift their souls to vanity nor swear deceitfully. That is the only condition of membership of the one universal Church, the catholicity which extends to all men, everywhere, always, the protestantism that protests against everything that is insincere and unreal, every substitution of the letter that kills for the spirit which gives life.

In what has preceded it is possible that

readers who have not lived in China may seem to see a world portrayed that contains unfamiliar features. Yet I shall have wholly failed if the general impression is one of novelty and distance from the experiences of our own race. To say that China is another world, contradictory, upside down, incomprehensible, is a facile and superficial burking of the problems it presents, and would only fortify the barriers whereby we and the Chinese are parted from one another.

Of course there are differences between them and us, differences which it would be foolish to minimize, yet in the main they are the result of quite measurable and accountable differences in geographical surroundings and historical development. They may, I think, be chiefly summarized under two headings: first, differences due to the fact that Chinese institutions and ideas derive predominantly from one source, while European civilization is the resultant of many competing influences, no one of which has ever overshadowed the rest in importance; secondly, differences due to the inflexible nature of the Chinese language. With a vast facility for phrase-making, and a wealth of fine distinctions that make it an

admirable medium for many forms both of colloquial speech and of literary composition, Chinese labours under the great disability that it possesses so small a stock of separate syllabic sounds as to make it structurally incapable of incorporating words of foreign origin without distorting them under clumsy and often almost unrecognizable disguises; and this peculiarity is, of course, aggravated by the use of an ideographic instead of an alphabetic system of writing. How serious a handicap this fact constitutes will be readily understood if we ask ourselves where we should be if the various tongues of modern Europe had been so constituted that they could not assimilate hosts of words from Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and from one another. It is a real and a grave barrier.

Yet under these and other differences the nature of man and the working of his spirit are the same as among ourselves, and this I have tried to show. In particular, I hope I have struck a blow at a notion which I always like to hit on the head wherever I meet it—the notion that We are an inherently progressive, and They an inherently stationary kind of man. The things which I have

attempted to describe are not specifically Chinese characteristics, but simply human characteristics, exemplified in Chinese surroundings. We too have our conservative classical orthodoxies, very like that of the Confucian pedant; we too have our Taoism, both of the higher and the lower kind; we too have, if I mistake not, as much of the heathen heart in us—the heart which mistrusts the final worth of right—as the Chinese; we too have our Buddhist moods. As with them, our various dispositions of the soul enshrine much that is beautiful and true, and they are liable to the same kind of corruptions and diseases as are to be found among the Chinese.

There are dark and terrible things to be found in China; but is there any that cannot be matched among ourselves? At bottom we are one with them. So our religion, like our manhood, is not just a religion, and that of China another religion, for religion in its proper meaning is a word that admits no plural: in both subservience to the letter kills, but within all and before all and beyond all there breathes a spirit which gives and is life.

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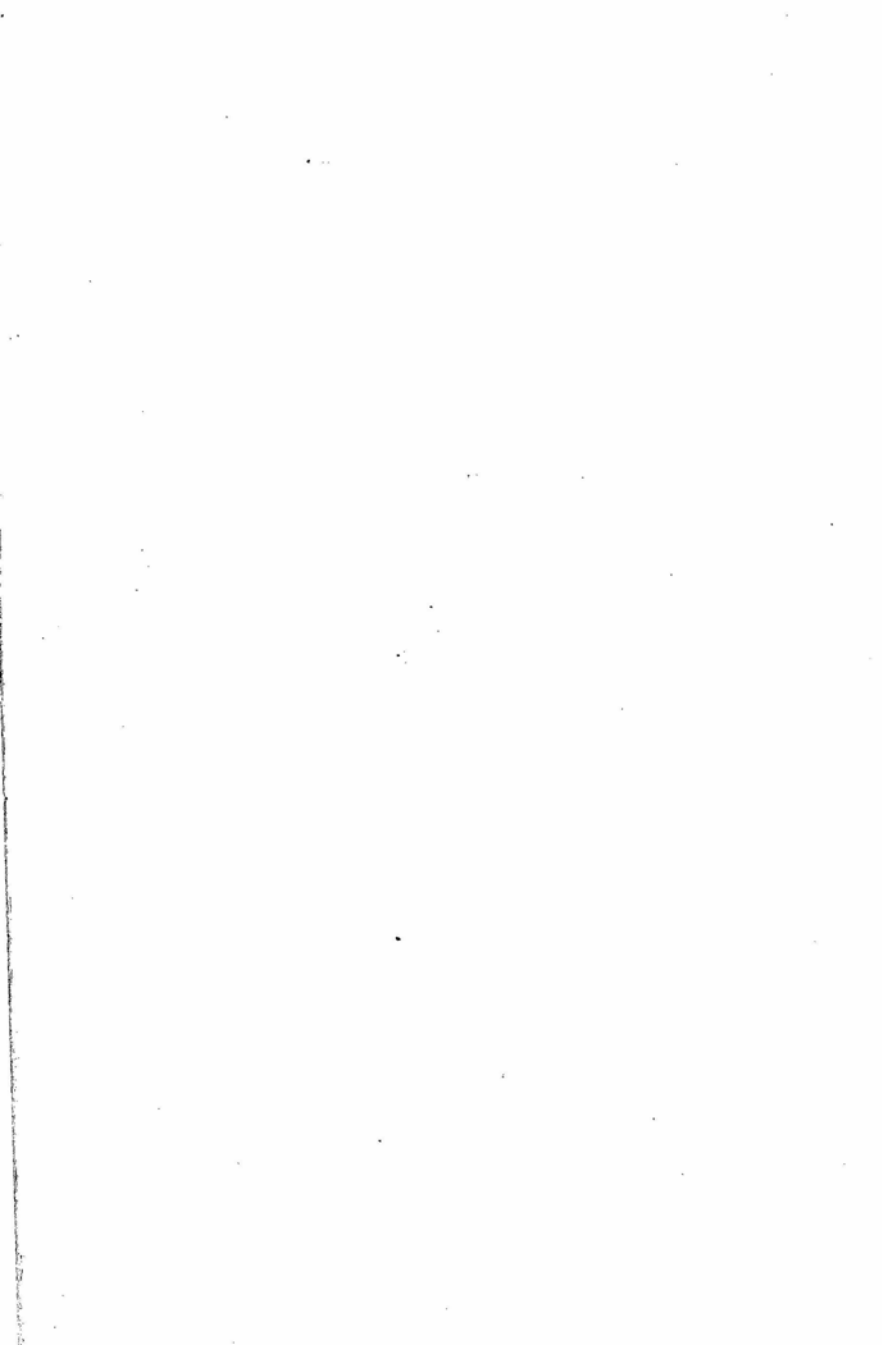
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